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FAMOUS INDUSTRIALISTS



Famous American Actors and Actresses



*by Frederick Wagner
and Barbara Brady*

ILLUSTRATED BY GERALD MCCANN



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1961

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**To Mary Ward
the bearer of glad tidings
about the theatre
to every part of America**

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Edwin Forrest

1806-1872

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Edwin Forrest as King Lear

Edwin Forrest

1806-1872

THE first American-born actor to win greatness, Edwin Forrest was one of the most colorful, controversial and tragic figures in the history of the American theatre. The story is told that, toward the end of his life, he was complimented on the way he played King Lear. The aging actor drew himself up to his full five-feet-ten-inches and roared in his deep, penetrating voice, "*Play Lear?* Sir, I *play* Othello and Macbeth, but I *am* Lear." Indeed, he had much in common with Shakespeare's proud, obstinate and ill-fated king.

Edwin Forrest's father, William, was a poor, humble workman who came to America from Scotland. He finally settled in Philadelphia, where, in 1795, he married Rebecca Lauman, a native Philadelphian of German descent. They had seven children, six of whom survived infancy. Edwin, the next to the youngest, was born on March 9, 1806.

William Forrest never was able to rise above his humble beginnings; he worked as a bank runner, earning barely enough to support his large family. When he died in 1819, they were plunged even deeper into poverty. Instead of admitting defeat, Mrs. Forrest put herself and her children to work; and she lived to enjoy the tremendous fame and fortune Edwin achieved.

When only eleven, Edwin, who was playing outside a

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Philadelphia theatre, was asked by the manager to substitute for an ill performer in the show that evening. Undaunted by the fact that the role was that of a young girl, he accepted. Unfortunately, some of his friends were in the audience that night. When they recognized him, their howls of laughter drowned out nearly everything he said.

This experience whetted his appetite for the theatre, and he spent considerable time watching performances and reading plays, especially Shakespeare. One night he attended a demonstration of the effects of laughing gas and volunteered for one of the experiments. After inhaling the gas, he launched into a soliloquy from *Richard III*. Even though the spectators were impressed, he fled the auditorium in embarrassment as soon as he recovered from the gas.

Edwin's schooling, which always had been sporadic, ended with his father's death. He was apprenticed successively to an importer, a printer, a barrel maker, and a ship supplier; but his early taste of acting had spoiled any other type of work for him. In his spare time he took elocution lessons and was an energetic worker with an amateur theatrical group.

On November 27, 1820, when he was only fourteen, he made his formal professional debut at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, playing the young hero, ultimately poisoned by his stepfather, in *Douglas*, a popular tragedy of the era. Although his performance was well received, the managers of the Philadelphia theatres were not sufficiently impressed to give him many professional acting jobs in the next few years. However, he gained more and more experience with the amateurs.

Finally, in the fall of 1822, he was engaged for a company that was to play at a chain of theatres in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and in Lexington, Kentucky, which were then still fron-

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tier towns. The actors, especially the novice Edwin Forrest, received excellent notices in the newspapers; but attendance was sparse, and in April, 1823, the managers abandoned the venture. Instead of disbanding, the company stayed together, playing wherever they could find a stage and a few paying customers in the smaller Ohio towns. Despite the many hardships, Edwin was fascinated by life on the frontier and delighted with his reception by the rough, boisterous audiences. His experiences during these months aroused a patriotic fervor and an admiration for the common man which he never lost.

Following a brief stint with another acting company in Lexington, and an even briefer stint with a circus, he was hired by James Caldwell, an actor who managed a very successful theatre in New Orleans. After a week's journey by steamboat down the Mississippi from Louisville, Forrest reached New Orleans early in February, 1824.

Although the acting company was first-rate, his ambition was constantly thwarted because James Caldwell reserved all the best roles for himself. At eighteen, Forrest thought he deserved something better than secondary parts. In other respects Caldwell treated the burly, good-looking young actor well; he even made several attempts to introduce him to the socially prominent families in New Orleans. Forrest, however, preferred the robust frontiersman to the socialite and sought out the rougher elements in town. James Bowie, inventor of the bowie knife, and an Indian, Chief Push-ma-ta-ha, became his boon companions.

Even in secondary roles Forrest's talent was evident; his vigorous acting attracted an outspoken and intensely loyal following. By January, 1825, Caldwell was forced to bow to Forrest's increasing popularity and award him better parts, but the stormy young actor had found a new source of dis-

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satisfaction. He and Caldwell, it developed, were rivals for the attentions of the troupe's leading lady, Jane Placide.

After a violent quarrel with Caldwell over the young actress, Forrest resigned from the company and published an announcement in the local paper calling the actor-manager a scoundrel and a coward. Caldwell reduced this grand gesture to insignificance by ignoring it. Realizing his hot temper had exposed him to public ridicule, Forrest retreated from New Orleans and went to live with the tribe of his Indian friend, Push-ma-ta-ha. After two months he returned home to Philadelphia, knowing that his devoted family would not reproach him for his folly. He was right: as always, his mother and two unmarried sisters greeted him adoringly; in later years he repaid their devotion by supporting them in splendor.

In the fall of 1825 Forrest joined an acting company in Albany, New York. There his roles were substantially better than they had been in New Orleans: Macduff in *Macbeth*, Richmond in *Richard III*, and even Iago when Edmund Kean, the great English tragedian, played Othello. Kean, appearing as a guest star with the company, was greatly impressed with the young actor's characterization of Iago; it was an original interpretation, not merely an imitation of other actors' portrayals. Albany critics and audiences shared Kean's enthusiasm; and when the season ended in May, 1826, the manager offered the promising young actor a New York City engagement in the fall.

Edwin Forrest made his official New York debut on November 6, 1826. For his first performance he chose the role of Othello, one ideally suited to his robust manner and resonant voice. When the final curtain came down, the ovation was thunderous. It was an historic moment in the American theatre: for the first time, an American-born actor had emerged

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as a star of major importance. At twenty, Edwin Forrest had achieved his goal; in almost one leap he had bounded to the top of his profession. Audiences cheered him; society welcomed him; and the stockholders of the theatre voted him an immediate salary increase from twenty-eight to forty dollars a week.

In the seasons that followed Forrest proved that his New York debut had not been merely a momentary flash of genius. He triumphed in a series of exacting Shakespearean roles: Richard III, Macbeth, Shylock, Julius Caesar, and King Lear. In New York, Albany, Providence, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Nashville, and New Orleans, his popularity increased with every engagement. To audiences he was something more than just another outstanding actor: he signified that a native American from the working classes could rival the English in an artistic field they previously had dominated.

Edwin Forrest was deeply moved by this patriotic enthusiasm and responded by announcing a contest designed to encourage American talent in another field: playwriting. In the fall of 1828 he offered a prize of five hundred dollars and half the receipts of the third performance for a five-act tragedy by an American playwright in which an Indian would be the chief character.

Among the judges of the first contest was the noted poet, William Cullen Bryant; the prize went to *Metamora*, based on the tragic struggle against the encroaching white man by the New England Indian called King Philip. *Metamora* became one of the most successful roles in Forrest's repertory; undoubtedly his experiences with the tribe of Chief Push-ma-taha contributed to the effectiveness of his characterization.

The contest was repeated for a number of years; nine plays were awarded prizes, and Forrest actually produced

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seven of them. Even though none of these contests produced a notable dramatist, they opened the way for aspiring writers in the future. Unfortunately, Forrest marred his generous purpose in originating the contests by getting into a number of squabbles with the contest winners over royalty payments and the question of who actually owned the rights to the plays.

In July, 1834, this brusque, brilliant American set sail for a cultural tour of Europe. He attacked sightseeing with the same energy and thoroughness he applied to his acting. During his two-year stay abroad he spent considerable time in Paris, made a trip across Russia from St. Petersburg to the Crimea, and also visited Greece, Italy, Germany and England. In August, 1836, he returned to the United States for a series of performances in Philadelphia and New York, but by October he was back in England, ready to undertake his first professional London engagement.

The leading English actor at this time was William Macready. Although he strongly disapproved of Forrest's style of acting, considering it crude and extravagant, he made a few gestures of hospitality on behalf of the London theatrical world. Since Forrest just as strongly disapproved of Macready's acting, which he thought was overrefined, the basic antagonism between the two men could not be concealed for long. The seeds of a bitter feud were sown; thirteen years later it was to erupt in violence and bloodshed.

After a generally enthusiastic critical reception in London, Forrest set out in December for a tour of the English provinces, where he had only moderate success. By February he was back in London, to embark on an intensive courtship of Catherine Sinclair, the pretty nineteen-year-old daughter of an English acting couple. Forrest bluntly overrode their ob-

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jections that he was twelve years older than Catherine and an American as well. Late in June, 1838, he married the vivacious girl and, after a brief honeymoon on the Continent, brought his bride back to the United States.

His long absence had only whetted the American public's enthusiasm for him; his return engagements were an unbroken series of triumphs. Endowed with tremendous physical endurance, he worked incessantly; a perfectionist, he never ceased trying to improve his characterizations. In the years that followed, his good fortune continued; no other American actor had yet emerged to challenge his supremacy. He had only one rival, in fact, and that was Macready, who returned to the United States in 1843 for his second tour in this country. The antagonism between the two tragedians became more pronounced, and the newspapers began to mention it. Because of an underlying anti-British feeling, public sentiment was on Forrest's side.

Events moved toward a crisis when Edwin Forrest went to England in February, 1845, for another acting engagement. On his opening night in London in *Othello*, he was hissed by several members of the audience. Rumors circulated that Macready, or at least Macready's partisans, were responsible. In any event, Forrest, with his almost aggressive Americanism, his pride and his temper, was not one to pass over this affront to his country and to himself. When the newspaper writers attacked his portrayals of the other roles in his repertory, especially the Indian chief in *Metamora*, Forrest rather abruptly ended his London engagement and set out on a tour of the provinces, where matters did not go much better. So many other acting companies were touring at the time that there were not enough audiences to go around. Only in Dublin,

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where the Irish were eager to approve anyone of whom the English disapproved, did he meet a really enthusiastic reception.

In Edinburgh, Forrest made it a point to attend Macready's opening in *Hamlet* in March, 1846. In the scene just before the entrance of the players, Macready, as Hamlet, tried to portray indifference by daintily fluttering a handkerchief. At this point a loud hissing was heard from one of the boxes in the auditorium. Several members of the audience recognized the culprit: it was Edwin Forrest.

The incident caused an uproar and was given considerable newspaper publicity in both England and America. Forrest made no attempt to deny his action; instead, he vigorously defended it, pointing out that hissing was an accepted method of expressing disapproval. He overlooked the fact that one star rarely hissed another.

In August, 1846, Forrest returned to America, where he still was the reigning favorite. By now he was having marital problems: he and Catherine had a series of quarrels about her parents' interference and about the friends she chose. Forrest also tended to brood because all four of their children had died in infancy. Nevertheless, he purchased land south of Yonkers, New York, and began building a magnificent stone castle, which he named Fonthill.

In the autumn of 1848 Macready returned to the United States for another tour. In New York and Boston the press attacked him for the rude reception Forrest had received in England; and when both Macready and Forrest undertook appearances in Philadelphia at the same time, matters came to a head. The audience hissed Macready and threw things at him; he made a curtain speech disclaiming any responsibility for the troubles Forrest had had in London. He also made

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capital of Forrest's having hissed him in Edinburgh. Forrest then attacked Macready in a notice he inserted in a Philadelphia paper; Macready, in turn, threatened to sue Forrest for libel. Fortunately, for the next few months the two rivals were booked for tours in different parts of the country, but the newspapers kept the controversy alive.

Macready was not the only person with whom Forrest was feuding: after a series of violent quarrels with Catherine, he left her shortly after beginning a New York acting engagement early in 1849.

On May 7, 1849, Macready opened in *Macbeth* at the Astor Place Opera House in New York. Anti-British sentiment was rampant; Macready became the butt of the resentment of the common man toward the aristocratic factions. On opening night he was bombarded from the balcony by coins, eggs and even theatre seats. The next day he cancelled the remainder of his engagement, but changed his mind when he received a petition signed by Washington Irving, Herman Melville and forty-five other prominent New Yorkers, urging him to continue.

The announcement that Macready would repeat *Macbeth* on May 10 caused a furor. The anti-British groups organized a full-fledged demonstration in protest. Pamphlets denouncing Macready were distributed; placards were prepared. A mob of several thousand collected in the streets around the Astor Place Opera House. More than three hundred policemen were on hand to maintain order, but a riot broke out soon after the performance began. The militia was called out; its arrival only increased the fury of the mob. Finally, the soldiers were ordered to fire. Thirty-one of the rioters were killed; many more were injured. *Macbeth* played through to the end, but after the performance Macready went into hiding, then fled to Bos-

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ton, where he took the first ship back to England. Forrest repeatedly denied any connection with the demonstrations that led to the Astor Place Riot, yet even his closest friends did not hold him entirely blameless.

Two years later Forrest was involved in another scandal. When he filed suit for divorce, his wife filed a counter-suit. N. P. Willis, editor of the *Home Journal*, attacked Forrest and defended Catherine in an article; soon afterwards Forrest encountered Willis in New York's Washington Square, knocked him down and caned him. Willis sued for damages and won. The divorce case lasted for nearly two months, ending in January, 1852, after sensational accusations on each side. Although Catherine was awarded three thousand dollars a year alimony, Forrest fought the decision so doggedly in the courts that she had little left after paying all her legal fees.

Despite the controversies that had swirled about him, Forrest found his popularity undiminished. However, in 1857 a combination of gout and rheumatism forced him into temporary retirement. When he returned to the stage in the fall of 1860, he found that younger men and newer fashions in acting were beginning to threaten his position. In 1865 he became partially paralyzed. More and more he was forced to play in less and less important cities. He still drew audiences, but they came more out of curiosity about his past grandeur than from admiration for his present state. Lonely, plagued by ill health, battling against the rising reputation of such younger stars as Edwin Booth, he found life increasingly difficult. By the fall of 1872 he was so crippled that he no longer could move about the stage; he tried giving a series of readings, but abandoned them to return to his home in Philadelphia for a rest. There, on the morning of December 12, 1872, he was found dead in his room.

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His name survives in the Edwin Forrest Home overlooking Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, a haven for aged actors which he endowed in his will. Philadelphia also has remembered him with the handsome Edwin Forrest Theatre on Walnut Street. And, although his extravagant, emotional, rough-hewn style of acting was outmoded even before his death, his fame endures: as the first native American actor to win stardom, as a patron of American playwrights, and as one of the most vivid personalities in the entire history of the American theatre.

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Joseph Jefferson

1829-1905

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Joseph Jefferson as Bob Acres in *The Rivals*

Joseph Jefferson

1829-1905

ONCE, late in life, Joseph Jefferson visited Catskill, New York, to speak before the Rip Van Winkle Club. While having supper at the local hotel, he overheard a conversation between a waiter and a commercial traveler.

"Yes, sir," the waiter was saying, "Rip Van Winkle went up into the mountains and went to sleep. He slept so long his head wore a hollow right into the stone. After twenty years he woke up and came back here."

"Surely you don't believe that," the traveler objected.

"It's true," the waiter insisted seriously. Then he pointed to Joseph Jefferson. "There he is. That's Rip sitting right over there."

It is not surprising that the Catskill waiter identified Jefferson as the actual Rip. He had appeared in *Rip Van Winkle* thousands of times before several generations of theatre-goers all over America, and in England, Scotland, Ireland and Australia as well. Some small towns even declared a "Jefferson Holiday" when he arrived, so that everyone could go see Joe Jefferson bring Rip to life. Even the most reserved and fault-finding critics acclaimed his acting for its warmth, charm and engaging naturalness.

He was the third Joseph Jefferson to act on the stages of America. His grandfather, the first Joseph Jefferson, had emi-

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grated to America from England in 1801; he was a comedian of skill, highly regarded for his performances with stock companies in New York and at the old Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia.

The second Joseph Jefferson was less successful than either his father or his son. He was a courteous, cheerful, kindly man, with some talent as an actor and a painter, but unable to assert himself. Once some friends reproached him for spending time fishing when he had just gone bankrupt. He replied with a smile that he was so poor he could not afford to let anything worry him.

With scarcely a thought about whether he could support a wife and family, he married an actress eight years older than himself, the daughter of a penniless French planter from Santo Domingo and the widow of a dissolute Irish comedian. By her first husband she had had one son, Charles Burke, who also became an actor.

The third Joseph Jefferson, still remembered today as the greatest comic actor of his time, was born in Philadelphia on February 20, 1829. The family was too poor for his mother to stop acting merely because she had a baby to care for, so one theatre or another served as young Joe's playpen. As soon as he could toddle he was pressed into service whenever a small child was needed for a bit part in one of the productions; it meant a few more dollars added to the meager family income.

At four he greatly impressed the leading comedian at a Washington theatre with the skill of his imitations. One day, without telling him what was going to happen, the comedian put him in a sack, carried him on stage, and dumped him out to face the audience. Whereas most children would have fled in terror or in tears, young Joe smiled, bowed to the audience, and did a little song and dance along with the comedian. The

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people in the audience took him to their hearts, as many audiences were to do in the future. Then, according to the custom in those days, they showered coins upon the stage. Joe's delight when a bright silver dollar landed was so infectious that by the end of the performance he had collected twenty-three more dollars. Hard-pressed as his parents were for money, they let him keep this magnificent sum as his own private savings account.

When he was eight, he made his first appearance on a New York stage, playing a Greek pirate slain in combat with an American sailor. Even at this age his acting was natural: tradition has it that he nearly cut off the big toe of his child opponent.

By now the Jefferson family had been increased by the birth of a daughter, Cornelia. In 1839 Joe's father, discouraged by failure in the East, decided that the family should seek its fortune in Chicago, then a thriving little town of four thousand inhabitants. From Albany the Jeffersons took a packet-boat to Buffalo. Since they had no money they planned to pay their passage by acting in towns where the boat stopped along the way. But bad weather kept audiences away, and in desperation they persuaded the captain to agree that he would settle their account if young Joe would give him a private performance. Joe embarked bravely on the twenty-five stanzas of a popular song, "The Devil and Little Mike." The captain was not so brave; halfway through Joe's performance he said he had had enough—but he declared their debt paid. Joe realized that he would never make his fortune as a singer.

From Buffalo the family continued to Chicago by steamer, with Joe watching fascinated as Indians paddled out in canoes to offer beadwork and moccasins for sale.

Mr. Jefferson found Chicago no more receptive than the

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East, and soon the family was on the move again, crossing the prairie in open wagons, using wardrobe trunks as seats. They passed from town to town, and once, while they were traveling in sleighs down a frozen river, the sleigh bearing the wardrobe and scenery went through the ice. It was a bedraggled troupe that performed in the next village.

Something even more embarrassing soon occurred. Few real theatres existed outside the larger cities; actors played wherever a makeshift stage could be devised. In one town the only platform available was in a slaughterhouse, so the pigs were turned out, to take refuge under the building. The highlight of the play that evening was the familiar song, "Home, Sweet Home." As Jefferson's mother began to sing, the pigs started to bump their backs against the floorbeams. Mrs. Jefferson sang louder and louder; the pigs squealed louder and louder. By the end of the last stanza Mrs. Jefferson was in tears; the audience was hysterical with laughter.

In Springfield, Illinois, the Jeffersons erected their own theatre, a very simple and inexpensive wooden building, forty feet wide and ninety feet long, with plank benches for seats. Because even gaslight was little known in the region, illumination was by sperm-oil. With the theatre finished and the opening night set, the future for once looked bright.

Then the blow fell. The city fathers, prejudiced against the vagabond actors, passed a law requiring an expensive license for any dramatic performances. The Jeffersons despaired; all their funds were tied up in the building.

A young lawyer in town heard of their predicament and offered to intercede. He wanted no fee, he said; only to see fair play. Arguing the actors' case skillfully and humorously, he persuaded the lawmakers that the theatre was an ancient and honorable institution; the law requiring a license was repealed.

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The young, unknown lawyer was Abraham Lincoln.

Even so, the Springfield venture failed to prosper, and soon Mr. Jefferson had moved his family to Mobile. There, at thirty-eight, he died of yellow fever on November 24, 1842. His family was destitute. Joe and his sister worked at small jobs around the theatre; Mrs. Jefferson was reduced from leading lady to running a boarding house for actors. But since most of them were as unsuccessful as her husband, this project, too, collapsed.

Joe Jefferson was receiving a hard training in life and in acting. Not yet fourteen, he found himself once more on the road with his mother, sister and half-brother, Charles Burke. Again they moved from town to town; again audiences were small and receipts poor. But there were a few happy occasions. Near Liberty, Mississippi, they acted before an ideal audience. Not one of these people had ever seen a play before, yet a dollar apiece admission was cheerfully paid. The stage was a covered platform between two barns, and, because a steady breeze was blowing, the candles burned out halfway through the performance. It was finished by the light of the harvest moon, to the delight of both the audience and the actors.

They went on to Galveston, and from there to Houston. Even when they followed the American troops into Matamoros during the Mexican conflict of 1846, they barely managed to earn enough to keep alive. Worn out by the struggle, Mrs. Jefferson died in 1849, and Charles Burke five years later, at only thirty-two.

Six months after his mother's death Joseph Jefferson married a young actress named Margaret Lockyer, who was to bear him six children in eleven years. By now he was twenty-one. His childhood had been insecure, filled with misfortune, poverty, ill luck. But though his father had left no other legacy,

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he had endowed his son with a cheerful disposition in the face of adversity; and, unknowingly, he had inspired his son with the determination to succeed.

Joe Jefferson now worked unflaggingly. He acted with several companies in Philadelphia, embarked on a short-lived tour as leading man with a second-rate troupe, then tried stage-managing companies in Macon, Savannah, Wilmington, Baltimore and Richmond. Gradually he accumulated enough money for a brief journey by clipper ship to England and France, where he visited the birthplace of his mother's parents.

By September, 1857, he was back in New York, engaged as the leading comedian for the opening of a theatre named in honor of Laura Keene, a popular actress-manager, noted more for good looks than for her dramatic abilities. This was his first opportunity to star with an important company, and he made the most of it. Then, the following year, he established his right to stardom with his performance as Asa Trenchard in *Our American Cousin*. *Our American Cousin* is remembered today only as the comedy President Lincoln was watching at Ford's Theatre the night he was shot by John Wilkes Booth; Jefferson, however, had left Miss Keene's troupe by this time.

In the summer of 1859, after his success with Laura Keene's company, Jefferson could afford to take his family to board at a Dutch farmhouse in Paradise Valley, Pennsylvania, at the foot of the Poconos. On one dull, rainy day he climbed to the loft of the barn and, lying on the hay, browsed through *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*, noting with pleasure that Irving had seen and praised one of his performances. Then he remembered *The Sketch Book* and "Rip Van Winkle," and inspiration struck! Surely, he thought, an American story by an American author was just the thing for an American actor.

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Both his father and his half-brother, Charles Burke, had played in *Rip Van Winkle*, and Jefferson knew that the existing dramatizations of the story were wretchedly inadequate. Nevertheless, he immediately set eagerly to work on his characterization of Rip. Wardrobes yielded old leather and bits of mildewed cloth for his costume; he personally supervised the making of a special wig. Soon he had everything needed for a performance of *Rip Van Winkle* except a good version of the play. With the resourcefulness he had learned in early childhood, he sat down and wrote the play himself.

Joseph Jefferson made his first appearance in *Rip Van Winkle* in Washington. The performance was a success with the critics and with the audience, but Jefferson himself was not satisfied with it. His plans to perfect the play and his characterization, however, were interrupted by the death of his wife in 1861.

Two of his six children had died young, and now his wife was gone. A lesser man would have grown embittered; but Jefferson, though grief-stricken, set himself a new course of action. In September, 1861, he sailed out of San Francisco, to be away from America for five years. After touring throughout Australia and New Zealand, he traveled to England by way of South America. This visit to England was to produce the version of *Rip Van Winkle* he so eagerly sought.

While in England Jefferson worked with Dion Boucicault, a popular playwright of the day, on a revision of the play. One change Boucicault insisted upon was the inclusion of scenes at the beginning of the play showing Rip as a young man. This, he thought, would make the ne'er-do-well more appealing.

The revisions in the play finished, Jefferson worked night and day to revise his characterization. One evening he was

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practicing before the mirror in his room. Suddenly there came a knocking at the door, which he opened to find his landlady and a crowd in the hall, demanding to know where the madman was. Jefferson blushed to realize that he had been rehearsing Rip with all the lights on and the window shades up.

Finally the opening night at the London theatre drew near. Boucicault was pessimistic about the play's chances; he thought the character of Rip was too complex.

"I think," he said, "you're shooting over the heads of your audience."

"I'm not aiming at their heads," replied Jefferson. "I'm aiming at their hearts."

His aim was sure. *Rip Van Winkle* was an overwhelming success in England; the triumph was repeated when he returned to America. Jefferson's position as a star was now secure. Perhaps he put something of his father's cheerful inability to cope with the world into his characterization of Rip. In any event, with his new success, poverty and hardship were behind him forever.

A contemporary critic described his first entrance in the play as:

"... the incarnation of the lazy, good-natured, dissipated, good-for-nothing Dutchman that Irving drew . . . the kindly, simple, ruddy face, lighted by the tender, humorous blue eyes . . . the lounging, careless grace of the figure; the low, musical voice . . . the sweet, rippling laughter . . ."

and the scene of Rip's awakening:

"Here he has thrown off his youth, his hair has whitened, his voice is broken to a childish tremor, his very limbs are shrunken, tottering, palsied. The maundering, almost imbecile old man, out of whose talk come dimly rays of the old quaint humor, would excite only ridicule and laughter in the hands of an artist less gifted

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than Mr. Jefferson; but his griefs, his old affections, so rise up through the tones of that marvelous voice, his loneliness and homelessness so plead for him, that old Lear, beaten by the winds, deserted and houseless, is not more wrapped about with honor than poor old Rip, wandering through the streets of his native village.

"From the rising of the curtain on the first scene, until its fall on the last, nothing is forced, sensational or unseemly. The remarkable beauty of the performance arises from nothing so much as its entire repose and equality."

Shortly after his return to America he met Sarah Warren; they were married on December 20, 1867, in Chicago. This marriage was to produce four more young Jeffersons.

While touring the West in 1868 and 1869, Jefferson became one of the pioneers in an innovation in theatrical custom, known as the "combination system." Up to this time nearly every large city and many smaller ones had what were known as "stock" companies. These companies had permanent headquarters in one city, even though they did go out on brief tours to smaller towns. Just as the stock company had permanent headquarters, so it had a permanent group of actors, each of whom played a wide variety of roles in a wide variety of plays. A young actress might appear as Ophelia in *Hamlet* one night, as Lydia Languish in *The Rivals* the next, and as a chambermaid the next. Frequently these stock companies were made up of excellent actors, but just as frequently the actors were called upon to play parts for which they were badly suited by talent, temperament or physical appearance.

Under the combination system, a group of actors was recruited to play in a combination of only a few plays, instead of in dozens as they did with the stock companies. This meant that the actors could be carefully selected to fit the very few parts they would have to play; it also meant that the group

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would have to be constantly on the move from town to town to find new audiences. Jefferson felt that the greatest benefit to the public from this system was that an audience in a small California town, for example, could see a play performed by the same cast seen earlier by an audience in New York City. An advantage for Jefferson himself was that he could play Rip all over the country, supported by his own hand-picked cast.

When he was not out on tour with *Rip Van Winkle*, Jefferson performed the play at Booth's Theatre in New York in 1869 and again from 1870 into 1871. During this latter engagement an actor friend of his died, and when Jefferson started to help the family make funeral arrangements, he was shocked to discover that the minister at the church his friend had attended would not conduct the burial service, since he disapproved of theatre people. Jefferson was told, however, that there was a little church around the corner where the funeral might be held. And so "The Little Church Around the Corner" (the Church of the Transfiguration on East Twenty-Ninth Street in New York City) received its name. To this day it is regarded as the Protestant actors' church.

In 1875 Jefferson returned to England for a two years' stay, which included engagements in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dublin and Belfast. His one failure was in Dublin, where he turned down the manager's suggestion that he play Rip as an Irishman; the ardent Dubliners were actively hostile toward the Dutchman from America.

By late 1876 Jefferson, now approaching fifty, was back in America. One more milestone in his theatrical career remained. This was the role of Bob Acres in *The Rivals*, which he performed first in 1880 and revived in 1896 with an all-star cast, including Mrs. John Drew (the grandmother of Lionel,

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Ethel and John Barrymore) and Julia Marlowe, later to be famous as part of the Shakespearean team of Sothorn and Marlowe.

Now that he was firmly established as a great comedian, Jefferson, for the first time in his strenuous life, was able to relax. He was a prosperous man, with an estate in New Jersey and a huge plantation on Orange Island, near New Iberia, Louisiana, the country associated with the pirate Lafitte and the wandering Acadians of *Evangeline*. In 1889 he built another home at Buzzard's Bay, Massachusetts, and in his last years he acquired still another home, in Palm Beach, Florida.

By now his brown hair was mixed with gray; he wore it somewhat longer than was the general custom, perhaps to disguise the fact that his head was rather small. Jefferson described himself as having a classic profile, not Greek or Roman, but "pure Nut-cracker."

During these later years he toured only twelve weeks in the fall and six weeks in the spring. In his spare time he began to paint seriously. Again his talent proved greater than his father's. When his paintings were exhibited in 1899 and 1900, the critics greeted them respectfully, if not enthusiastically.

He also amassed a notable art collection, which included works by Constable, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Rembrandt, Sir Thomas Lawrence, and his two special favorites, Mauve and Corot.

Honor followed honor. Yale awarded him an M.A. in 1892 and Harvard followed suit in 1895. In 1893 he succeeded the great tragedian Edwin Booth as president of The Players, the famous club for theatre people and other eminent men.

His supremacy as an actor was now unchallenged; audiences all over the country laughed and wept at his performances, and came close to adoring him. His contagious humor,

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his loveableness, his cheerfulness and generosity were not qualities reserved only for his performances in the theatre, however. Those who knew him as a man loved him as much as audiences did. His friend Helen Keller once said, "If you were deaf and blind, and could hold Mr. Jefferson's hand, you would see in it a face and hear a kind voice unlike any other you have ever known." When a testimonial dinner was announced in his honor in 1895, actors and actresses outdid each other in making arrangements for it.

As he grew older, he spent a great deal of time gardening. "All old people," he remarked, "should have a garden. It is so full of hope." For a while he took up shooting, but soon abandoned it, because cruelty, even to animals, was not in his nature. Like his father, however, he always had time for fishing. Grover Cleveland, his frequent companion in these years, said he never saw any other man get so much joy from the sport of fishing.

One great achievement remained, and it came about almost by accident. This was his autobiography, published first in 1889. He had started to write it merely as a legacy for his children, but a chance remark aroused the enthusiasm of William Dean Howells, author of *The Rise of Silas Lapham* and other novels; he persuaded Jefferson to have it published. It is a fascinating, genial and modest account of a remarkable life.

Some measure of the man may be found in his remarks about acting:

"The surest way to fail is to imitate someone else. You must be yourself."

"Never try to gauge the intelligence of your audience by the price of the seats."

"Always keep the promise you make to the public. Always do the thing you can do best."

"Never allow vulgarity or impurity to tarnish a performance."

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He summed up his feeling about his profession by saying that an actor must be gifted with imagination and personal magnetism, must have a passion for his calling, and must combine these qualities with industry and earnestness. He himself acted best, he said, with a warm heart and a cool head.

He took fame in a quiet way. His last performance was on May 7, 1904, in a dramatization of Charles Dickens' *The Cricket on the Hearth*. He died on April 23, 1905, one month after his seventy-sixth birthday, at his home in Palm Beach. He had become almost as much of a legend as Washington Irving's Rip, and the New York *Evening Telegram* paid a fitting tribute:

"He could act, paint, fish, write, plant, dig, pity, enjoy and love, and, above all, he knew how to be a friend. . . . Americans loved him living and they love him dead. Farewell, good man and great—Farewell! Farewell!"

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Edwin Booth

1833 - 1893

-



Edwin Booth as Hamlet

Edwin Booth

1833-1893

IN MANHATTAN'S Gramercy Park stands the statue of a grave, handsome actor as he appeared in *Hamlet*, his most famous role. Across the street is the home of The Players, the famous club he founded for actors, artists, writers and men of affairs. These are two enduring monuments to the memory of Edwin Booth, who has been called "the darling of misfortune" by one of his biographers, and "the last tragedian" by another.

The omens at Edwin Booth's birth seemed propitious. He was his parents' seventh child; he was born with a caul covering his head; and, on the night of his birth, a shower of meteors streaked across the sky—these, according to superstition, were signs of great good fortune.

But there were other circumstances not so favorable: Junius Brutus Booth, his father, was a gifted but erratic actor, given to fits of madness and bouts of excessive drinking.

Born in London in 1796, Junius Brutus Booth eloped to America in 1821 with an eighteen-year-old Covent Garden flower girl named Mary Ann Holmes; they settled on a small farm near Belair, Maryland.

There, in a log cabin, Edwin Thomas Booth was born on November 13, 1833. He was named after Edwin Forrest, the first great American-born actor, and comedian Tom Flynn, an old crony of Junius Brutus Booth. Almost five years after Ed-

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win's birth another son appeared, a child adored and pampered by his parents. This was John Wilkes Booth.

A quiet child with large brown eyes so intense they seemed almost black, Edwin grew up in the midst of a large—and disorderly—family circle. In addition to his mother and father and nine brothers and sisters (five of whom died quite young), there was his grandfather, a gruff old dissolute whom the children nevertheless loved; and, before long, Junius's sister, her husband and their eight children arrived to live on the farm.

Soon the family began living in Baltimore during the winter, spending only summer on the farm. Edwin's formal schooling was sketchy: he learned his "three R's" from a Miss Susan Hyde; then he was tutored, mainly in fencing, by a retired French naval officer; finally, and briefly, he attended a school emphasizing elocution and dramatic reading.

While in Baltimore in 1845, Edwin, with a group of neighborhood children, undertook his first theatrical venture. In a cellar in Triplet Alley, they gave amateur performances, charging three cents for reserved seats and one cent for standing room; the admission fees were turned over to the janitor as rent. Edwin's career with this group came abruptly to an end after he cut up one of his father's costumes to clothe himself for the leading role in *Richard III*. Midway in the performance, a raging Junius Brutus Booth appeared at the entrance. Edwin tried to escape through a window, but his unwieldy armor trapped him. He never again tampered with his father's wardrobe.

In the meantime, Junius Brutus Booth's behavior was becoming more and more erratic. Frequently he failed to show up at the theatre; sometimes he never even arrived in the town where he was scheduled to perform. His wife realized it was

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imperative for some member of his family to watch over him when he was away from home. The task fell to young Edwin, only thirteen at the time.

Even though Edwin was under a constant strain as his father's guardian, he enjoyed the excitement of travel, and he gradually began to absorb valuable lessons in acting from watching performance after performance. On September 10, 1849, he made his professional debut as a messenger in *Richard III* at the Boston Museum. Junius lent him a pair of spurs, but offered no other help; and had Junius not been the star of the production, few people in the audience would have noticed the nervous sixteen-year-old boy with a quavering voice.

Two years later, in 1851, Edwin had a better opportunity. Junius was scheduled to appear in *Richard III* at a New York theatre, but he refused to leave his hotel room. When Edwin pleaded with his father not to miss the performance, Junius's only answer was that Edwin could go act the part of Richard III himself.

In desperation, Edwin went to the theatre, where, to his surprise, delight and terror, the manager agreed to let him appear. No announcement of the change was made to the audience; applause greeted Edwin's entrance, but a chilly silence fell as soon as people realized that this was not the great Junius Brutus Booth they had paid to see.

Edwin struggled on. The many nights spent observing his father's performances as Richard III served him well; he knew most of the lines by heart, and he was able to produce an excellent imitation of his father's mannerisms. Soon the audience warmed to his performance, and at the final curtain he received an ovation.

Shortly after this, one of Edwin's brothers, Junius, Jr., returned from California with glowing tales of the gold rush

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and booming theatres. Edwin and his father accompanied him on the return trip to the West, going by way of the Isthmus of Panama. They arrived just in time for a depression. The elder Booth, supported by his two sons, played in San Francisco and Sacramento, but soon grew discouraged and sailed for home. Edwin stayed behind and soon was off on a tour of the rugged mining camps—Nevada City, Grass Valley, Rough and Ready, Downieville. On the return swing, the troupe was stranded by a blizzard in Nevada City. Here Edwin received word that his father had died on November 30, 1852, on the way up the Mississippi from New Orleans.

Back in San Francisco, Edwin became a popular favorite in *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*. Junius, Jr., complained that Edwin did not take his work as an actor seriously enough; he was careless about learning his parts and careless in performing them. But Edwin, freed of the responsibility for his father's behavior, was too busy having a good time to pay his brother much heed. With a friend he built a shack in an actors' colony known as "Pipesville" and listed himself in the city directory as a "comedian and ranchero." Soon he had a reputation for playing practical jokes. His gaiety and handsome looks attracted women young and old.

In July, 1854, Edwin set out for Australia, lured by tales of thriving business other actors had brought back. But, as in California, he arrived just as a depression occurred. Audiences were small and unenthusiastic in both Sydney and Melbourne, so he headed back toward America, stopping briefly in Honolulu. There, the King of the Sandwich Islands, in mourning for his father, watched the performance from backstage to avoid appearing in public. When the chair on which he was sitting was needed onstage as the throne in a scene in the play, the

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king graciously consented to stand.

When Edwin landed in San Francisco in April, 1855, he had only ten dollars in his pocket. Discouraged and depressed by his failure in Australia, he went on a wild spree. His brother, Junius, Jr., did little to help him; perhaps he resented the fact that Edwin, despite his carelessness and foolhardy actions, was by far the more brilliant actor of the two.

In the fall of 1856 Edwin returned to the East and settled down to serious work as an actor. His first notable success came in Boston on April 20, 1857, as Sir Giles Overreach in *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. Less than a month later, at twenty-three, he was starred in *Richard III* at a New York City theatre. The manager of the theatre, in publicizing the performance, had played upon the fame of Junius Brutus Booth; the house was full. The slender, pale young man, just over five-and-a-half-feet tall, with flowing black hair and flashing, dark-brown eyes, caught the imagination of the audience. The critics had some reservations, but praised his tremendous power and energy.

By now Edwin and a young actress named Mary Devlin had appeared together in several cities in *Romeo and Juliet*. Soon they had fallen deeply in love, and on July 7, 1860, they were married.

Like so many other families, the Booths were divided when the Civil War broke out in April, 1861. Edwin and Junius, Jr., sided with the North, John Wilkes with the South. At this time, however, Edwin was invited to appear at the Haymarket Theatre in London. He considered this a splendid opportunity and, with high hopes, sailed for England.

His London engagement was not a success. Sympathy for the Confederacy was running high in England, and Edwin was known to side with the Union; perhaps this was a factor con-

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tributing to his failure. The critics attacked his performances in *The Merchant of Venice*, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* and *Richard III*. Only *Richelieu*, a romantic drama, was a success; but this was the last bill of his engagement. A brief tour of the English provinces followed, notable only because Booth's supporting cast in Manchester included a young actor named John Henry Brodribb, later to become famous as Henry Irving.

By fall, 1862, Booth and his wife were back in America with their infant daughter, Edwina, born in London the previous December. Even though the London engagement had been a failure, it brought Booth tremendous prestige in America. When he rented a house in Dorchester, outside Boston, Julia Ward Howe, famous for the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," welcomed the Booths with a huge reception that all Beacon Street attended.

But tragedy was imminent. Mary was seriously ill with tuberculosis; and Edwin had started drinking again. When he returned to New York for an acting engagement, Mary stayed behind in Boston, too sick to travel. One night in February, 1863, Edwin felt a cold draft as he lay on his bed, and he heard Mary calling to him. A few nights later telegrams arrived from Boston urging him to rush to Mary's bedside at once. As the train pulled out of New York the following morning, Edwin, peering out the window, was shocked to see Mary's face appear before him. In Boston, just about this moment, Mary died. Booth blamed himself for her death, sure that worry over his dissipation had weakened her condition.

Still stunned by grief over his wife's death, Booth, with his brother-in-law, leased the Winter Garden Theatre in New York that fall. Junius, Jr., was installed as business manager. There, on November 24, 1864, to raise funds for a statue of Shakespeare in Central Park, a benefit performance of *Julius*

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Caesar was given. Edwin appeared as Brutus; Junius, Jr., as Cassius; and John Wilkes Booth as Mark Antony, who cries out for vengeance upon Caesar's assassin. Less than six months later this performance was to be remembered with horror.

The night following the benefit of *Julius Caesar*, Edwin opened in *Hamlet*. It was to run for one hundred consecutive performances, breaking Shakespearean records in this country. His handsome appearance, his grace, his elegance of diction admirably fitted him for the role. Audiences were rapturous, critics only slightly less enthusiastic. Even John Wilkes Booth, like Junius, Jr., always resentful that his brother's fame as an actor overshadowed his own, conceded: "There's but one Hamlet to my mind; that's my brother Edwin. You see, between ourselves, he *is* Hamlet—melancholy and all."

The assassination of Lincoln by this same John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, plunged the nation into mourning and stunned the world. The Booth family, totally ignorant of the insane plot, was overwhelmed; existence became a nightmare. A guard was placed around the Philadelphia home of one sister; her husband, though later proved innocent, was thrown into prison. In Cincinnati, Junius, Jr., narrowly escaped a mob of five hundred ready to lynch him; later he too, though innocent, was imprisoned.

Edwin was playing in Boston; the manager abruptly closed the theatre as soon as the news from Washington arrived. Blanch Hanel, whom Edwin planned to marry, broke the engagement. Alone, Edwin returned to his New York home early in the morning of April 17; he was there when Lincoln's body was brought to New York to lie in state at City Hall. Newspapers attacked all the Booths, dredging up old scandals, true and untrue. Hundreds of vilifying letters poured in upon Edwin and other members of the family. Edwin found

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that few friends stood by him, and these few he treasured, especially Thomas Bailey Aldrich, author of *Marjorie Daw*, who moved into Edwin's home to help his friend bear his trouble. Although Edwin's supporters were influential enough to save him from arrest, he was sure that, at thirty-one, his career and his life were shattered. First his father, then his wife, and now his brother—one misfortune had followed too closely upon the next. How wrong the omens at his birth had been!

Booth had declared he would never appear on a stage again, yet some of his greatest triumphs—and disasters—in the theatre lay ahead of him. Financial necessity forced him back to work; his return to the New York stage in *Hamlet* was announced for January 3, 1866. The house was packed, but no one, Booth least of all, was sure what his reception would be. The answer came a moment after the curtain rose on the second scene: a tumultuous outbreak of cheers and shouting. The public had absolved him of any share in his brother's infamy.

But his misfortunes were not at an end. One morning in March, 1866, the New York theatre where he had been appearing burned to the ground, with Booth's entire supply of costumes and the scenery for several lavish productions, a loss of more than forty thousand dollars. Undaunted, Edwin decided to build his own theatre at Sixth Avenue and Twenty-Third Street, and went out on tour to pay for it.

While at McVicker's Theatre in Chicago, he played opposite eighteen-year-old Mary McVicker, who, like so many other women, became infatuated with him. When Edwin left Chicago, Mary McVicker went along as a member of the acting company. Within a year she became his wife.

On February 3, 1869, in the midst of a downpour of rain and snow, Booth's Theatre opened with Edwin Booth and Mary McVicker in a splendidly mounted production of

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Romeo and Juliet. The critics had small praise for the performances; Edwin Booth was rarely successful in his portrayal of stage lovers, and Mary McVicker was rarely successful in any role. But the theatre itself received magnificent notices. Its three towers rose imposingly above the street. The impressive lobby was faced with Italian marble; a marble staircase led to the balconies. The auditorium would seat eighteen hundred people. Booth's Theatre cost Edwin more than a million dollars and several years of unceasing hard work, and it brought him close to disaster.

The very qualities which made him an excellent Hamlet made him a bad businessman. Always striving for perfection, he presented one splendid production after another; but the expenses always exceeded the income. The Panic of 1873 was the final blow. Booth lost his theatre; early in 1874 he filed a petition of voluntary bankruptcy.

Edwin, who had worked so hard to build his beautiful theatre, now worked twice as strenuously to pay off his debts. After a New York engagement in the fall of 1875, he set out on a grand tour of the South, receiving \$30,000 for fifty performances. Then he moved west to San Francisco for an eight-week engagement that smashed all local records and netted him \$50,000. In November, 1876, he was back in the East, and between then and May made \$72,000. In less than two years he had managed to pay off what had seemed an overwhelming burden of debt.

By now his stature as America's foremost tragedian was unquestioned. Critics praised his masterful skill in declaiming blank verse, the brilliance with which he dramatized every line of his roles, and his deep understanding of the characters he portrayed, a sympathy that spoke to the hearts of his audiences. As he matured, he abandoned the exaggerations of his early

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characterizations; his performances became more and more natural.

One more personal tragedy awaited him. Ever since her infant son had died in 1870, Mary McVicker Booth had been behaving more and more oddly. Now, in the summer of 1877, she spent several months in voluntary confinement in a sanatorium. Her condition had not visibly improved when, in June, 1880, she sailed with Edwin for his second engagement in England.

Once more, Booth's reception in England was not cordial. Princess's Theatre, where he played in London, was a run-down house, unpopular with theatre-goers. *Hamlet* opened to a mixed reception, and even *Richelieu* did not succeed this time. Only *King Lear* was popular, and that came at the end of his engagement.

Then Henry Irving, by now as popular in England as Booth was in America, came forward with a proposal. He suggested that Booth co-star with him and Ellen Terry, his leading lady, in a production of *Othello*. As a novelty, Irving proposed that he and Booth alternate in the roles of Othello and Iago. The production played to full houses throughout its run; both Iagos were judged first-rate, both Othellos second-rate.

Mary McVicker Booth was by now totally deranged and dying. Her parents had come over to London, and when the group returned to New York, the McVickers carried Mary off to a house they had rented on West Fifty-Third Street. On November 13, 1881, she died, but not before the newspapers had publicized the McVickers' hostility toward Booth, whom they blamed for the disaster. His dignity in the face of this unfounded slander won him new respect among his friends.

At forty-eight Edwin Booth had many misfortunes behind him, and they had taken their toll. His tendency to mel-

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ancholy had increased; he shunned personal publicity and was inclined to be solitary. To the world at large he seemed to be at the very pinnacle of success; actually he was worn out before his time.

In the summer of 1882 Booth and his daughter Edwina sailed again for Europe. After a London engagement and a three-month tour in England, Scotland and Dublin, he opened in January, 1883, at the Residenz Theatre in Berlin. The supporting cast and director were hostile and doubtful of Booth's ability; his own doubts were strong, because he was to speak in English and the others in German. The opening night audience gave him a resounding ovation. The intense quality of his playing, which had failed to stir the English, roused the Germans; and the ovations were repeated in Hamburg, Bremen, Hanover, Leipzig and, finally, Vienna.

Shortly after his return to America he purchased a house near Newport, an exclusive Rhode Island summer resort, and another home in Boston. Although he continued to work steadily, in the next few years he was bothered more and more by illness. While appearing with the Italian actor, Salvini, in *Othello*, he actually collapsed on stage, but managed to finish the performance.

In 1887 Booth and Lawrence Barrett, the only actor at that time who even came close to rivaling Booth's popularity, formed a co-starring partnership; it was so powerful in audience appeal that other touring attractions found it almost impossible to compete with them; the partnership continued until Barrett's sudden death in 1891. Booth finished out the tour, and, on April 4, concluded with a matinee of *Hamlet* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. It was to be his last performance on any stage.

His home was now at The Players, the club he had

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founded a few years earlier as a place where actors could mingle with artists, writers and other men of prominence. The Players had been incorporated in January, 1888, by Booth, Joseph Jefferson, John Drew, Augustin Daly, Mark Twain, General Sherman and eight others. Booth was elected president; he presented the club with a beautiful house at 16 Gramercy Park, reserving only the right to use the third floor as his own quarters.

Shortly after one o'clock on the morning of June 7, 1893, the lights in The Players suddenly went out. On the third floor a woman's voice cried, "Don't let Father die in the dark!" It was Edwina, Booth's daughter, who was sitting by his bedside. The failure of current was only momentary, and the lights flashed back on. A second or two later Edwin Booth was dead.

The newspapers acclaimed him as the last of the great tragedians, leaving no successor. That November, on the sixtieth anniversary of Booth's birthday, The Players honored his memory at a public meeting at Madison Square Garden Concert Hall. The cards of admission were headed simply: "Good night, sweet Prince."

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The Drews and the Barrymores

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Ethel, Lionel and John Barrymore in Rasputin and the Empress

The Drews and the Barrymores

FOR more than a century the Drews and the Barrymores were dominant figures in the American theatre, a family of brilliant, spirited, commanding actors and actresses; of beautiful women and handsome men, as clever in comedy as they were heartbreaking in tragedy. Starting with Mrs. John Drew, through her son John, her son-in-law Maurice Barrymore, and her grandchildren Lionel, Ethel and John Barrymore, each of them cut a distinctly individual path through the history of the American stage. All of them won fame, and some gained notoriety. Most of them earned a tidy fortune, but they sometimes spent even more than they made. The comedy and tragedy they portrayed so well on the stage were equally a part of their personal lives.

Mrs. John Drew was born Louisa Lane in Lambeth Parish, England, on January 10, 1820, of actor parents. Before Louisa was a year old her mother carried her on stage in a play; instead of crying as the role required, she laughed with delight. In 1827 she and her mother came to America; that September the seven-year-old actress made her American stage debut at a Philadelphia theatre as the Duke of York in a production of Shakespeare's *Richard III* starring the popular tragedian Junius Brutus Booth. The Duke of York was a boy's role, but it was

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common practice at that time for girls or even women to portray young boys. Soon Louisa was hailed as a child prodigy; in January, 1829, she played five different characters in *Twelve Precisely*, a farce written especially to suit her talents.

In the years immediately following, Louisa made a few appearances in New York City and several tours throughout the South and the Middle West; but Philadelphia, where she was a great favorite with audiences, was always the center of her stage activities.

In 1836 Louisa married an English tenor, Henry B. Hunt, a marriage that ended in divorce. She then married an Irish singing comedian, George Mossop, in 1848; Mr. Mossop died in less than a year. On July 27, 1850, she married another Irishman, an actor nearly eight years her junior, John Drew, Sr. Before he died in 1862, they had three children: John, Georgiana and Louise. There was a fourth child, Sidney, whom Mrs. Drew sometimes claimed as her own and sometimes said was adopted.

On August 31, 1861, Mrs. Drew assumed management of the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia; she was one of the first women in America to undertake such a project. Although the building was heavily mortgaged when she took control, her shrewd business sense enabled her to pay off the mortgage quickly and establish the Arch Street Theatre as one of the most famous playhouses in the country. Until 1877, when she began to book traveling companies, she maintained her own permanent acting group, known as a stock company, in which she played many of the leading roles. Her skilled performances in such roles as Lady Teazle in *The School for Scandal* and as Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals* contributed significantly to the brilliant reputation of her theatre.

John Drew, her son, had been born on November 13,

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1853. His acting debut with his mother at her theatre on March 24, 1873, was so unpromising that Mrs. Drew departed from the script to remark to the audience how dreadful he was. However, two years' training at the Arch Street Theatre gave him considerable polish, and in 1875 he joined the noted company managed by Augustin Daly at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York. After his first season in minor roles, his rise was rapid.

Another promising young actor joined Daly's company in 1875: Maurice Barrymore. Barrymore was the stage name of Herbert Blythe, born in Fort Agra, India, in 1847, the son of a British civil servant. After attending England's highly esteemed Harrow and Oxford, he began studying to be a lawyer. However, while vacationing at an English seaside resort, he rescued an elderly gentleman and a young lady from a gang of toughs. This elderly man, a well-known actor, convinced Barrymore that his handsome looks and dashing manner qualified him for a career in the theatre. Barrymore, who had received considerable publicity when he won the English amateur middleweight championship, found little difficulty in obtaining work as an actor. Managers felt his reputation as a boxer would draw audiences out of curiosity; in a short time he developed into an extremely capable actor.

Maurice Barrymore and John Drew, Mrs. Drew's son, became friends when the two young actors appeared in minor roles at Daly's Fifth Avenue Theatre in a production of *Hamlet* starring the great Edwin Booth, then at the peak of his career. Drew invited Barrymore down to his Philadelphia home as soon as they had a free weekend; there Maurice met John's nineteen-year-old sister, Georgiana Drew, with whom he immediately fell in love. Despite Mrs. Drew's vigorous criticism of Barrymore's irresponsible, fun-loving ways, Mau-

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rice and Georgiana were married in 1876. Lionel was born on April 12, 1878; Ethel on August 15, 1879; and John on February 14, 1882.

Georgiana discovered that many of her mother's objections to Maurice Barrymore were well-founded. He was a very talented actor, but rarely took his talent seriously. When in the right mood, he gave brilliant performances, but his moods changed quickly. Although he was dashing, witty and charming, these qualities did not make him a loyal and devoted husband.

But Georgiana had consolations. There were her children, and there was her own blossoming career. A tall, slender, blue-eyed woman, she had developed into a highly gifted and popular comedienne.

Usually, when Maurice and Georgiana went out on tour with plays, their children—Lionel, John and Ethel—were left in Philadelphia with Georgiana's mother, Mrs. Drew. When Lionel was five and Ethel four, they were given a great treat by being taken along when their parents toured with the great Polish star, Madame Helena Modjeska, then a reigning favorite on the American stage. Shortly after this tour the Barrymore family went to England for nearly two years; during this stay abroad Maurice had several acting engagements at London's famous Haymarket Theatre.

Once back in America, Ethel was sent to school at a convent, and Lionel to a Catholic boarding school. John stayed at home with his grandmother, Mrs. Drew, to whom he was deeply devoted. Later the two boys attended Seton Hall in South Orange, New Jersey.

In the meantime, Georgiana's health had begun to weaken. In 1892 she went on a long cruise to the Bahamas; on her return she seemed better, but the improvement was only

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temporary. Early in the summer of 1893, her condition was diagnosed as bronchitis, and a trip to California was prescribed. Her husband, Maurice, was touring with a company in the West; her mother, Mrs. Drew, was acting in Boston; and her brother, John Drew, was appearing in London in a highly successful production of *Twelfth Night*. Thirteen-year-old Ethel was taken from school to accompany her mother on the trip to California by way of the Isthmus of Panama.

The future looked brighter when Georgiana and her daughter reached Santa Barbara. People in the California town were friendly; Georgiana seemed happy and animated. Then, suddenly, she died. Too late, it was discovered that she had been suffering from tuberculosis. All alone, Ethel had to make the arrangements to bring her mother's body back East for burial; and on the week's journey by train back to Philadelphia she had to sit up night after night in the coach because she could not afford a berth.

Their mother's death was an overwhelming blow to Lionel, Ethel and John; and when their father, Maurice Barrymore, remarried the following year, they were deeply shocked. They also were deprived even of the haven of the Philadelphia home of their grandmother, Mrs. Drew: through a series of financial reverses she lost control of the Arch Street Theatre and, after closing her home, began living in rooming houses or visiting briefly with either her son John or her son Sidney.

Now in her seventies, Mrs. Drew did her best to help her daughter's three children. Though neither Lionel, Ethel or John had shown the least interest in acting, Mrs. Drew decided to train them for the stage because this was the only profession she knew. This decision, born of necessity, was to produce three of the greatest actors the American theatre has ever known.

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Mrs. Drew and her son Sidney were then touring in Sheridan's comedy, *The Rivals*. Fifteen-year-old Lionel Barrymore was assigned a small role and told he would make his acting debut at a matinee in Kansas City. Inexperienced and awkward, Lionel played the matinee and evening performances in an agony of embarrassment. When he returned to his room in a Kansas City boardinghouse that night, he was greatly relieved to find a note from his grandmother, Mrs. Drew, firing him.

While still a teen-ager, Lionel made a few more appearances in small roles in various productions in New York and elsewhere, none of them especially distinguished. Because his real ambition was to become an artist, not an actor, he was overjoyed when his family allowed him to attend classes for three years at the Art Students League in New York.

In the meantime, Mrs. Drew's son John had risen to be leading man in Augustin Daly's company; but after a quarrel with Daly over the sharing of profits, John Drew signed a contract with the brilliant producer Charles Frohman. Under Frohman's management, he became known as a master of drawing-room comedy. Of average height, with aristocratic features and a carefully groomed mustache, suave and dignified John Drew acted with a style so polished it seemed almost effortless. One contemporary critic aptly remarked, "John Drew doesn't act; he just behaves." Most of the plays in which he appeared were slight comedies of little lasting merit, but his popularity was so great that audiences flocked to see them.

Off-stage as well as on he was a model of graciousness. His one marriage, to an actress named Josephine Baker, was a very happy one. Their country home was in the exclusive Long Island resort of East Hampton, where today the John Drew Theatre honors his memory. Louise Drew, their daugh-

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ter, was sent to school in France; the ease of her life provided quite a contrast to the hardships suffered by her cousins, the three Barrymore children.

In June, 1894, Ethel Barrymore was summoned to Montreal, where her uncle Sidney and her grandmother, Mrs. Drew, were still touring in *The Rivals*, in which Lionel had made his disastrous debut a year earlier. Like Lionel, Ethel was given a tiny part; but, unlike Lionel, she carried off her scene extremely well and stayed with the troupe during its tour of eastern Canada and Maine.

Then she came to New York City, where for several months she tried doggedly to obtain work as an actress. Finally her uncle, John Drew, arranged for her to be understudy in his current comedy, *The Bauble Shop*. When the show was scheduled to go on tour, one of the actresses did not want to leave New York City, so Ethel was given her part. Barely sixteen, she appeared as a worldly noblewoman of forty-five, and she played the role beautifully.

After the tour, more understudy jobs for Ethel followed in plays in which John Drew starred under Charles Frohman's management. At last, in the fall of 1896, she was assigned the part of a hearty country girl in the New York production of *Rosemary*, starring John Drew, with the charming, wistful Maude Adams as his leading lady. Although Ethel's role was small, she received pleasant notices from the critics and began to feel that her acting career finally was underway.

Then came an opportunity to play a minor role in the London production of William Gillette's popular melodrama, *Secret Service*, in which Mr. Gillette played the starring part. Because Ethel all but idolized the handsome William Gillette, and because she remembered London so fondly from her childhood visit, she considered this a splendid chance. Now seven-

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teen, five-feet-six-inches tall, with dark-brown eyes and hair, Ethel had blossomed into a remarkable beauty; she was given a joyous welcome by the English theatrical and literary circles.

Life still was not easy. When the run of *Secret Service* ended, she decided to stay on in London even though she had only two decent dresses and very little money on which to live. Although she received many dinner invitations because of her great popularity, frequently, when not invited out, she was forced to exist on fruit, especially dates, which she ate in her room. By the late spring of 1897, having given up hope of obtaining an acting job in London, she reluctantly decided to return to America. The day before she was to sail, however, Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, then the most popular team on the London stage, asked her to stop by to see them. Having been greatly impressed by her beauty, wit and charm at several dinner-parties, they offered her a job in their acting company.

Ethel was jubilant, and so were a number of young men who had fallen desperately in love with her. First she became engaged to Irving's serious, intense son Laurence; then she became engaged to Gerald DuMaurier (who later became the father of novelist Daphne DuMaurier). Newspapers in both England and America rumored her engagement to several other eligible young bachelors: the Duke of Manchester, journalist Richard Harding Davis, and Winston Churchill.

When she returned to America late in 1898, she found that her social success in London had brought her considerable fame, but no guarantee of a job on the New York stage. Once again she found herself in a series of small roles in various plays produced by Charles Frohman.

The death of her grandmother, Mrs. Drew, in the fall of 1897 had left a significant gap in Ethel's life and in the lives

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of Lionel and John. John Barrymore, only fifteen at the time, had been living with Mrs. Drew in a rooming house in Larchmont, New York, when she died. Mrs. Drew's death was a profound shock for the boy, who had felt closer to her than to any other member of his family. Depressed and unhappy, he had begun to run wild by the time Ethel came back from England. In an attempt to distract him from his grief, she saw to it that he was sent abroad to the Slade School, a famous art institute in London.

In the spring of 1900 Lionel, Ethel and John had the first intimations of the tragedy that was about to strike their father, Maurice Barrymore. For many years Maurice had appeared as leading man in support of such foreign-born stars as Madame Modjeska, Lillie Langtry and Olga Nethersole, hovering on the verge of greatness but never achieving it. Then, in the fall of 1899, he had scored a tremendous personal success as the dashing, romantic Rawdon Crawley in *Becky Sharp*, a dramatization of Thackeray's novel, *Vanity Fair*. By early 1900, however, there were ominous signs. He began to forget his lines; frequently he appeared half dazed; often he was unable to distinguish between reality and illusion. His first great success, *Becky Sharp*, was also the last play in which he appeared. In 1903, hopelessly deranged, he was confined in a private sanitarium, where he died in March, 1905.

1900 brought Lionel Barrymore little advancement in his career as an actor. In February he appeared on tour in a melodrama called *Arizona*; not quite twenty-two, he was called upon to play a very old man. In the fall he came in to New York in a play called *Sag Harbor*; the play lasted for seventy-six performances, but Lionel was fired soon after the opening. Sixteen days before *Sag Harbor* had its New York premiere, Lionel's uncle, John Drew, opened in *Richard Carvel*, one of

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the greatest successes of his career.

Late in 1900 Ethel Barrymore began rehearsals for her first important role, that of the opera singer, Madame Trentoni, in *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*, a comedy by the popular American dramatist, Clyde Fitch. The play opened its pre-New York tryout in Philadelphia; at the first performance, Ethel, very unsure of herself, was both comforted and distracted when a voice from the balcony shouted, "Speak up, Ethel! You Drews is all good actors."

The Philadelphia critics attacked both the play and Ethel's performance. Completely discouraged, she begged producer Charles Frohman to close the production before exposing her to the barbed comments of the New York reviewers; to her despair, Mr. Frohman refused.

Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines was unveiled in New York on February 4, 1901. Contrary to everyone's expectations, most of all Miss Barrymore's, the production was a sensational success; the critics seemed to have difficulty finding adjectives lavish enough to express their enthusiasm for the lovely young actress's performance. One evening a few days later, on her way to the theatre, Ethel was astounded to see her name up in lights on the theatre marquee. Charles Frohman had elevated her to stardom!

In a short time Ethel Barrymore became one of the most popular personalities the American stage had ever seen. Her regal beauty, her haunting voice, her ability to play comedy or tragedy with equal skill, all these contributed to her fame. Young girls imitated her walk and her voice; it even became fashionable to claim to have "the Ethel Barrymore neck."

In the fall of 1901 Lionel appeared in a small role in *The Second in Command*, a comedy in which his uncle, John Drew, was starred; unlike Ethel, Lionel attracted scarcely any atten-

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tion at all. The following year, however, he scored his first outstanding success as a colorful Italian organ grinder in a play called *The Mummy and the Humming Bird*. John Drew had the starring role, but audiences left the theatre remembering Lionel's impassioned performance. His forte, he realized, was character parts.

The youngest of the Barrymore children, John, now was past twenty. His London art training had enabled him to obtain a job as an illustrator on the New York *Evening Journal* when he returned to New York, but he soon was fired because of his erratic ways. By borrowing clothes from his uncle, the impeccable John Drew, and by borrowing money from his sister Ethel, he was able to pose as a dashing young man about town.

When Ethel went on tour in *Captain Jinks*, she called in young John to substitute for another actor at one performance; he forgot his lines and capered about the stage, much to the embarrassment of his sister. A few unimportant roles in unimportant plays followed; then he was given a small but effective role as a wireless operator in *The Dictator*. This farce was a success in New York, where it opened in April, 1904; after New York it went on to tour the United States and then was taken to London, where it also was popular.

Christmas night in 1905 saw the three Barrymores playing together in the same theatre for the first time, although they were not all in the same play. The main attraction of the evening was James M. Barrie's *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire*, a whimsical comedy about an attractive, forty-year-old mother who resigns herself to a tranquil life by the fireside in order to watch over the happiness of her twenty-year-old daughter. In this, Ethel, just twenty-six, played the mother; John was seen in a small role. He also appeared as Harlequin in *Pantaloen*, a one-act

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play by Barrie which preceded *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire* on the program; Lionel played the title role in *Pantaloen*.

By now Lionel Barrymore had married a young actress named Doris Rankin; dissatisfied with his career as an actor, he yearned more than ever to become a painter. Ethel, who had helped him in every possible way to obtain parts in the theatre, now offered to loan him enough money so that he and his wife could live in Paris while he studied art at the Académie Julien. Deeply grateful, he accepted her offer and sailed for Europe; he did not return to the United States until 1909.

Soon after *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire*, John also was on his way out of the country. *The Dictator*, in which he had played the wireless operator, was scheduled for a tour of Australia. John joined the company, which was to sail from San Francisco on April 18, 1906. Shortly after five o'clock that morning, however, the city was shaken by the disastrous earthquake, and the ship on which the scenery and wardrobe for *The Dictator* had been loaded sank to the bottom of the bay. John wired his family that he had been thrown from his hotel bed by the tremors and had wandered down to the street, where an army sergeant put him to work helping victims of the disaster. When someone asked Barrymore's uncle, John Drew, whether he believed this story, Drew replied he was sure every word of it was true: obviously it would take an act of God to get his nephew out of bed and the United States Army to get him to work. Two weeks after the earthquake, young John Barrymore and *The Dictator* company finally got underway to Australia.

Ethel's faith in her two brothers never wavered. She continued to support Lionel and his wife in Paris; and when John returned from Australia, she mothered him, protected him, supported him, and did her best to extricate him from the scrapes

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in which he constantly was becoming involved. Now in his middle twenties, John, five-feet-ten, with his sister's dark-brown hair and eyes, had developed into an incredibly handsome, incredibly charming, and incredibly irresponsible youth. Even though most people dismissed him as a charming wastrel, Ethel saw his potential greatness.

In the fall of 1909, *The Fortune Hunter*, a comedy by Winchell Smith, revealed John Barrymore's talent to the theatre-going public. John gave an electric, uproarious performance as Nat Duncan, a discouraged young man on the verge of suicide who, instead of killing himself, sets out to win a million dollars (and the small-town girl who owns them).

When Ethel had married socialite Russell Griswold Colt early in 1909, Lionel Barrymore decided to abandon his art studies, return to America, and find a way to support his wife and himself. Now past thirty, a stocky, blue-eyed man, he had little success on the stage immediately following his return from abroad. Finally, one day in 1912 while seeking work in New York, he wandered down to the Fourteenth Street offices of D. W. Griffith, then experimenting with a new form of entertainment: motion pictures. Griffith gave Lionel a bit part in the film he was shooting; in a few weeks Lionel was playing leading roles.

One of his first films was *The New York Hat*, in which he appeared with a young actress whose real name was Gladys Smith; soon she was famous as Mary Pickford, "America's Sweetheart." The scenario for *The New York Hat* was written by a sixteen-year-old girl, Anita Loos, who later wrote two extremely popular books, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *But They Marry Brunettes*.

Lionel, who acted solely because it was the only way he knew to earn a living, found motion picture work very much

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to his taste. It was not overly demanding, and it paid well; Lionel, like the other Barrymores, had a flair for spending money. Moving back and forth between New York and California, he continued acting in films and also wrote a number of scenarios. Not until 1917 did he return to the stage.

Throughout these years Ethel Barrymore had continued to create one brilliant characterization after another, shifting skillfully from comedy to tragedy and back to comedy. There was the foundling raised by cowpunchers in *Sunday*; at rehearsals of this play Miss Barrymore suggested that a letter-reading scene end with a line that has since become better known than the play itself: "That's all there is; there isn't any more." After *Sunday*, there was the tragic charwoman in John Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*; the clever and beautiful heroine of W. Somerset Maugham's comedy, *Lady Frederick*; the middle-aged wife who is driven to suicide in Arthur Wing Pinero's *Mid-Channel*.

In 1911 Ethel Barrymore appeared in a one-act play by Barrie, *The Twelve-Pound Look*. She portrayed a bored, restless woman who discovers that her husband's first wife had achieved independence and happiness by becoming a typist; at the end of the playlet her own face reflects the twelve-pound look, twelve pounds being the cost of a typewriter. In 1912 Miss Barrymore revived *The Twelve-Pound Look* for a tour on the vaudeville circuit from coast to coast; it was a tremendous success then and remained a success whenever she revived it during the next quarter-century.

Since his hit in *The Fortune Hunter* in 1909, John Barrymore had maintained his popularity as a light comedian; but more energy was devoted to off-stage escapades than to developing his dramatic talents. Then, in 1916, he switched from light comedy to the stark tragedy of Galsworthy's *Justice*.

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With consummate skill, he portrayed a clerk who commits forgery, is sent to prison, and, mistreated and hounded even after his release, finally commits suicide. His performance proved to the critics what Ethel had constantly maintained: that he was one of the greatest actors the American stage had ever seen.

The following year John and Lionel joined forces in a dramatization of George DuMaurier's novel, *Peter Ibbetson*, with John as the dashing, romantic hero, and Lionel as the evil, loathsome uncle. Colonel Ibbetson was one of Lionel's biggest stage successes. He followed this with Augustus Thomas's *The Copperhead* early in 1918, in which he portrayed a Northerner unjustly suspected for many years of having been a Confederate spy. Lionel's characterization, ranging from youth to extreme old age, won him outstanding praise from the critics. In this same year John also scored a triumph; his portrait of a failure who pretends suicide so that his wife may marry a better man, in Tolstoy's *Redemption*, won him new laurels.

In April, 1919, *The Jest* brought John and Lionel together again. *The Jest* was a colorful drama set in Florence in the time of Lorenzo the Magnificent; John appeared as a romantic young poet who ultimately manages to defeat his arch-enemy, a vicious captain of mercenaries, played by Lionel. This was Lionel's last big stage success; during the next six years he appeared in a series of short-lived productions, including a calamitous revival of *Macbeth*. In 1925 he left the stage permanently.

For John Barrymore two great triumphs in the theatre remained. In 1920 he gave a memorable performance in *Richard III*, and in the fall of 1922 he appeared in a production of *Hamlet* which ran for one hundred and one performances in New York, breaking the record set by Edwin Booth more than

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half a century earlier. Critics and public alike acclaimed his Hamlet as one of the greatest portrayals by any actor in any role in decades. After a brief appearance in *Hamlet* in London early in 1925, John abandoned the theatre, except for an unfortunate appearance in an embarrassing farce, *My Dear Children*, in 1939 and the early 1940's. Brilliant though he was on the stage, he grew almost unbearably restless when forced to play the same part night after night; Hollywood offered him more variety, and, like Lionel, he found a motion picture salary very attractive.

Another chapter in the Drew-Barrymore saga closed in 1927 when John Drew, the Barrymores' uncle, on tour in an all-star revival of *Trelawny of the Wells*, was stricken with rheumatic fever and septic poisoning. He died early in the morning of July 9, a few months before his seventy-fourth birthday.

With one exception, marriage for all three of the Barrymores ended in divorce. After his divorce from Doris Rankin, Lionel had married Irene Fenwick, who died in 1936; their two daughters died in childhood. In 1923 Ethel divorced Russell Colt, by whom she had had three children. John had four wives: Katherine Corri Harris; poetess Michael Strange, the mother of Joan Strange Barrymore (better known as the late actress Diana Barrymore); actress Dolores Costello, the mother of John Barrymore II and Dolores Ethel Mae Barrymore; and Elaine Barrie.

After abandoning the theatre in 1925, both John and Lionel achieved considerable success in motion pictures. Ethel joined them in Hollywood in 1932 for the film *Rasputin and the Empress*; this was the only occasion, either in the theatre or in motion pictures, that all three Barrymores appeared together in the same vehicle.

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In 1928 Ethel Barrymore was honored by having a New York theatre named after her; for nearly two decades after John and Lionel went to Hollywood she continued on the stage with such successes as *Déclassée*, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, and *The Constant Wife*. One of her greatest roles, that of Miss Moffat, the English spinster in *The Corn Is Green* who goes to teach in a small Welsh village, came late in her career. *The Corn Is Green* opened in New York in November, 1940, and ran for fourteen months; it then toured for nearly two years.

While playing in *The Corn Is Green* in Boston in 1942, Miss Barrymore received news that John had died on May 29. His was a tragic story of a brilliant talent abused and mistreated; the last seven years of his life were a record of almost total dissipation and disintegration. Although he had made hundreds of thousands of dollars in Hollywood, he died deeply in debt.

Like her brothers, Ethel Barrymore also finally left the stage for motion pictures; after 1945, troubled by increasing ill health, she found work in the theatre too arduous and confined her activities to making films. Lionel Barrymore died in California on November 15, 1954, at seventy-six; and on June 18, 1959, Ethel Barrymore died, less than two months before her eightieth birthday. The era of the Drews and the Barrymores, one of the most brilliant periods in the American theatre, had ended.

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E. H. Sothorn

1859-1933

Julia Marlowe

1865-1950

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E. H. Sothern in *The Prisoner of Zenda*
and Julia Marlowe in *The Hunchback*

E. H. Sothern

1859-1933

Julia Marlowe

1865-1950

ONE evening in the fall of 1879 a nineteen-year-old actor made his stage debut as a cabdriver in a New York production in which his father was starring. The intense, nervous young man had only one line to say; he had practiced it hundreds of times. As he walked out to face the audience, he felt supremely confident. After all, with one line, what could go wrong? Then the moment came for him to speak. He opened his mouth, and stage fright seized him. Not a sound came out! All he could do was gesture frantically while his father grew angrier and angrier, and finally ordered him off the stage.

A few years after this an earnest girl of twenty-one, who had just spent three years studying day and night to be an actress, was approaching manager after manager in search of a job. Her ambition, she announced, was to play all the Shakespearean heroines. One man, on hearing this, looked her over stonily and then concentrated his attention on her rather large nose. "With that?" he sneered, and dismissed her.

Twenty years later these two young people were to be

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famous throughout America as the team of Sothorn and Marlowe.

Edward Hugh Sothorn was born on December 6, 1859, in New Orleans, where his father was acting with a stock company; but with the outbreak of the Civil War the Sothorns returned to their native England. Edward, one of four children, was sent to a school near Rugby that concentrated more on cross-country riding and fox-hunting than on books. Since his father opposed his interest in acting, he decided to attend an art school in London. Even his family soon recognized that his talent as a painter was very, very slight.

In the meantime his father, a high-spirited man with a great love of practical jokes, had returned to America, where he was a great favorite in comic roles. Edward came over in 1879; the ill-fated stage debut soon followed.

Although the elder Sothorn had absolutely no faith in his son's abilities as an actor, he agreed to provide an allowance of twenty dollars a week while Edward gained experience with the company acting at the Boston Museum. This actually was as much a museum as a theatre, for Boston was still opposed to the notion of using a building solely for the frivolous purpose of play-acting. For three months Edward played small parts there without pay, although he was presented with an envelope each payday. The other members of the company did not realize it was empty. After this, he went on tour with his father's company, a tour that was cut short by his father's illness. They returned to England, but Edward soon was back acting in America.

One day in Washington he received word of his father's death. The impact of the news did not hit him until the following evening, in the midst of a performance of *Richard III*. Playing the Prince of Wales, he had to speak of the king's

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death. Suddenly the realization of his own father's death overwhelmed him, and he sobbed out loud. The audience, having read the news in the papers, remained silent; in a moment he was able to control himself and go on with the part.

For the next few years Edward had very little success. He did manage to obtain work now and then, but always with touring companies that went bankrupt or in New York productions with brief runs. He even wrote a play called *Whose Are They?*, which he produced with a small legacy his father had left him. The production opened in Baltimore, stopped briefly in New York, and closed in Brooklyn. The next season a foolhardy manager sent it on tour under the title *Crushed*—and it was.

Then Edward was asked to rehearse, on a temporary basis, a small part in a new play, *One of Our Girls*, until the right actor for the part could be found. He agreed and, because the right actor never did appear, was still in the cast when the play opened in New York. It was his first success.

A real triumph soon followed. One day in going through some of his father's possessions he ran across an old play that seemed to have possibilities. He took it to Daniel Frohman, manager of the Lyceum Theatre. Frohman set him to work revising it with David Belasco, who was then Frohman's stage manager. Under the name *The Highest Bidder* the play was produced; it was a success; and E. H. Sothern found himself a star.

Sothern was to be the popular leading man with Daniel Frohman's Lyceum Theatre Stock Company for a number of years. There Maude Adams (just starting her career on the New York stage, a career that was to lead her to fame in *Peter Pan* and other comedies by James M. Barrie) appeared with him in *Lettarblair* and other plays. There he scored an out-

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standing success in the romantic drama *The Prisoner of Zenda*. At the Lyceum one of his leading ladies was Virginia Harned. She and Sothern were married in 1896, but over the years their careers separated them, and they were divorced in 1911.

After leaving the Lyceum, Sothern appeared in Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Sunken Bell* and in *If I Were King*, in which his dashing performance and ardent love-making as the poet François Villon brought him tremendous popularity.

In 1900, the year before his great success in *If I Were King*, E. H. Sothern had carried out a longstanding ambition to appear in *Hamlet*. The production seemed plagued by misfortune. Soon after opening in New York, Sothern was wounded during one of the fencing scenes; blood poisoning sent him to the hospital. He recovered and took *Hamlet* on tour; in Cincinnati all the scenery and costumes were destroyed when the theatre burned to the ground. There were compensations, however; his portrayal was highly praised by the critics, and Julia Marlowe, by then a star in her own right, saw one of the performances. Almost immediately she went to Daniel Frohman's brother Charles, also a producer, and proposed that she and E. H. Sothern co-star. It was a partnership that would last the rest of their lives.

The woman known to theatre audiences as Julia Marlowe had been born on August 17, 1865, in the little village of Caldbeck in England's Lake District, the region made world famous by Wordsworth and other poets. Her real name was Sarah Frances Frost. When she was five she was brought to America, where her father was then struggling to operate a store on the Kansas prairie. He had taken the name of Brough on coming to America; so Sarah Frances Frost now became Fanny Brough. One of her first memories was of raging blizzards and lurking Indians.

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Her father, ineffectual as a wage-earner, soon abandoned his store and Kansas. The family moved from one small town in Ohio to another, finally settling in Cincinnati. By now there were three more children, and all of them heartily detested the man their mother married after divorcing their father. Because this stepfather constantly insisted that the children learn some trade and earn some money, Fanny Brough went downtown one afternoon when she was thirteen and applied for a job with a juvenile production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Her family was completely surprised when she returned home and announced that she was setting out on tour the next day.

For nine months the *Pinafore* company moved about the Middle West; Fanny Brough was soon promoted from the chorus to the role of Admiral Sir Joseph Porter. At the end of the tour she returned home, to be set to work first as a packer of gingersnaps, then as a trainee telegraph operator, and finally as a dressmaker.

Just about this time a salesman called at her home, selling a volume of Shakespeare's plays illustrated with pictures of famous actors and actresses in the various roles. Fanny, by promising to give up her small weekly allowance, persuaded her mother to buy the book. From that moment on she was determined to become a great Shakespearean actress.

After a few tiny parts, including one in a touring company of *Rip Van Winkle*, she was engaged as a member of the company of a Cincinnati actress who planned to appear throughout the Middle West as the star of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night* and several other plays. Although Fanny Brough's parts were small and the company was a poor one, she worked industriously and managed to learn a great deal about the craft of acting. Off stage she was shy and solitary. Of medium height,

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she seemed frail; her large brown eyes and abundant dark-brown hair were her most attractive features.

By now she had attracted the attention of an ex-actress named Ada Dow, who persuaded Fanny's mother to let her bring the eighteen-year-old girl to New York for intensive training as an actress. Three years of arduous study followed before Fanny Brough again appeared on the stage. In the mornings she went up to Central Park and walked along the paths rehearsing speeches aloud. In the afternoons she studied one part after another under Miss Dow's guidance. In the evenings she usually went to the theatre to observe others act. In addition, she spent many hours at singing lessons. When she and Miss Dow moved to cheaper, quieter quarters in Bayonne, New Jersey, she could no longer walk in Central Park, but otherwise her schedule was much the same as before: hard work and very little companionship with anyone her own age.

Finally Miss Dow felt that her protégée was ready, and a new name was picked to fit the young actress's new personality: Julia Marlowe. They were both determined that Julia Marlowe was to play only Shakespeare and other poetic or classic plays; they were both determined that she should begin as nothing less than the star of the productions. Perhaps because they refused to recognize the possibility of defeat, they gained both objectives.

First, in the spring of 1887, they managed to obtain enough money to hire a company for a two-week tour of some small New England towns, with Julia Marlowe starred in three plays. Then, in the fall, they persuaded Julia's mother to pay the cost of hiring actors and renting a theatre in New York for a single matinee of a play called *Ingomar*, with Julia Marlowe starred. Mainly out of curiosity to see this daring young woman who, unknown and unrecognized, announced herself as a star, an

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audience gathered at the theatre where the matinee was to take place. A number of managers and critics were present. To their surprise, but not to hers, they were captivated by her performance. The reviews that appeared the following day were filled with praise, especially for the clarity and resonance of her melodious voice.

A restaurant owner financed a week's engagement at another New York theatre for productions of *Ingomar*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, all starring Julia Marlowe; this engagement brought bookings for a six-week tour of Chicago, Cincinnati, Louisville and the West. To outsiders, Julia Marlowe's sudden leap to stardom seemed miraculous; they did not know of the determined years of intense study that prepared her for it.

Miss Marlowe received many offers to do contemporary plays, but she persisted in acting the type of parts she felt represented worthwhile drama. For the most part she preferred to tour outside New York City. In 1890 she did appear for a brief engagement in Manhattan; financially it was disastrous. But in Boston, in Philadelphia, in Indianapolis and elsewhere she proved that a classic repertory could draw a paying audience. In Memphis, Tennessee, a theatre was named after her.

Some misfortune followed. In Philadelphia she was stricken with typhoid fever and was critically ill for a long time. Her marriage, in 1899, to a young actor named Robert Taber, proved unhappy. He insisted that they be co-starred and that she use the name Julia Taber; strange as it seems, much of her public failed to recognize her under this name, and audiences diminished. Robert Taber insisted on a production of *Henry IV, Part I* because the role of Hotspur offered him splendid opportunities; Julia Marlowe Taber played Prince Hal, and did not play it well. Soon they had separated and in

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1900 were divorced.

In the meantime, Julia Taber once again became Julia Marlowe. She had impressed New York audiences with her Juliet in 1887 and again in 1896; now, in 1899, she captivated them in *Barbara Frietchie*, a new melodrama by Clyde Fitch. In most ways the heroine resembled the Barbara Frietchie of Whittier's poem; the exception was that Miss Marlowe, at only thirty-four, did not gray her deep-brown hair.

A number of the critics bewailed the fact that Miss Marlowe had compromised her ideals by appearing in such an inferior play; she agreed, but the profits made possible projects dearer to her heart.

In 1901 she appeared in another inferior play, *When Knighthood Was in Flower*; again she scored a tremendous popular success and made a fortune.

But a great fortune and overwhelming popularity were not Julia Marlowe's goals. Her goal was a repertory company performing Shakespeare and other classics. When she saw E. H. Sothern in *Hamlet*, she was convinced that they could work together perfectly.

Producer Charles Frohman and Mr. Sothern shared her enthusiasm in the proposition, and Mr. Frohman agreed to pay each of them \$100,000 a year for a period of three years; in the early 1900's this was an amazing sum.

In October, 1904, they presented their first three repertory productions: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. The team of Sothern and Marlowe was an immediate success. Both took their work very seriously; both were extremely meticulous about every detail of the production. Every scene, every costume had to be strictly authentic. And a careless or inattentive performance was not tolerated from any member of their company.

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Sothorn and Marlowe continued together during the 1905-1906 season; and then, despite the fact that American actors had always met with disaster in London, they took their productions to England, fully expecting to lose \$40,000. Because they lost less than half this sum, they regarded the venture as successful.

After their three-year partnership agreement expired, they acted separately for a while, but in 1900 joined forces again. That year they co-starred in *Antony and Cleopatra*, which opened the New Theatre, a huge and handsome building in New York City financed by a group of wealthy men who hoped to establish an institution comparable to London's "Old Vic." Unfortunately this high-minded project, like so many others in the history of the American theatre, failed to succeed.

On August 11, 1911, E. H. Sothorn and Julia Marlowe were married in London. They continued to present their repertory of Shakespeare and other classics in New York and throughout the country; and after their marriage, in order to make touring more comfortable, they began to rent furnished houses wherever they played, however briefly. In 1914 illness compelled Miss Marlowe to leave the stage; and in 1916, although Mr. Sothorn continued to act, she announced her retirement.

After World War I, they were persuaded to return to the stage as a team in 1919 and continued acting until 1924, when they retired permanently. Both Miss Marlowe and Mr. Sothorn had, by this time, been awarded doctorates by George Washington University in recognition of their contribution to the American theatre; Miss Marlowe was awarded a gold medal for diction by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1929 and received a second doctorate in 1943 from Columbia University.

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After their retirement they traveled widely, spending most of their time abroad. Mr. Sothern died on October 3, 1933, shortly before his seventy-fourth birthday. With the outbreak of war in Europe, Miss Marlowe returned to the United States and settled at the Hotel Plaza in New York, rarely making public appearances of any sort. There, on November 12, 1950, she died at the age of eighty-five.

During their years as a team, E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe were regarded as the foremost exponents of Shakespeare in this country; they made both an artistic and commercial success of their productions, which they carried to towns and villages rarely visited by other touring companies. If, as some critics maintained, neither Mr. Sothern nor Miss Marlowe was inspired, they were capable, studious, energetic and dedicated. What they may have lacked in genius, they more than made up in hard work and devotion to the art of acting and to the intelligence of their public.

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Maude Adams

1872 - 1953

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Maude Adams as Peter Pan

Maude Adams

1872-1953

AT THE beautiful theatre built by the Mormons in Salt Lake City, a crisis occurred one summer night in 1873 during the performance of a farce called *The Lost Child*. The plot centered on a small infant who was rushed on and off stage and finally carried in on a platter. This night the five-weeks-old baby appearing in the play began screaming so furiously when placed on the platter that he could not be taken back on stage. The manager was frantic. Then he learned that the nine-months-old daughter of one of the actresses was in the theatre. He grabbed the child, set her on the platter, and in a moment she was on the stage. Because the baby had grown so large in just a few minutes, the audience roared. Then the baby sat up on the platter and smiled, and the people in the theatre were captivated. Many theatre-goers in the future were to be captivated by that smile, for the child was Maude Adams.

James Kiskadden, Maude's father, was a bank clerk, a fun-loving, rather irresponsible man. Her mother, Annie Adams, a descendant of the two Adams presidents, was an industrious actress, passionately interested in the theatre. Maude was born on November 11, 1872, in Salt Lake City; when she was two, the family moved to Virginia City, Nevada, and from there to San Francisco.

Theatre business in San Francisco was flourishing, and

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Annie Adams appeared in one play after another. Very often her daughter's name appeared on the programs, too, as "Little Maude." Often Maude had no lines to speak, but she learned how to sing and dance, and these skills were frequently put to use. By the time she was five or six she had begun to think up little touches that made her characterizations more effective: in one production she suggested to the manager that she skip rope instead of merely standing about with the other child actors; in another she insisted on serving real beer, instead of tea, so that the audience could see the foam running over the rim of the mug.

"Little Maude" was quiet and reserved, but she was very serious about the fact that she was an actress. She worked hard on her parts and always knew her lines perfectly; sometimes she knew the other actors' lines better than they did.

In 1882, when she was almost ten, she came to New York from San Francisco in the cast of a touring production. Although the play never opened in Manhattan, Maude was overwhelmed with excitement over her first visit to New York City. She was reluctant to return to the West because her mother and grandmother had decided she should attend school regularly, instead of going to classes only on rare occasions.

Despite her objections, Maude was enrolled at the Salt Lake Collegiate Institute. Modest, industrious, unassuming, she was popular with students and teachers alike. One teacher even tried to persuade her to continue her education and become an elocution teacher; but, for Maude, two years of school were enough. When she was twelve, she returned to San Francisco and the stage.

Her father had died in 1883; now she and her mother were closer than ever. They became, and remained, inseparable companions.

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By this time the name "Miss Maude Adams" had replaced "Little Maude" on the theatre programs. For a while, she and her mother were members of a company that toured the smaller California towns by stagecoach. In 1887 she was dancing in the ballet of a melodrama at a San Francisco theatre at a salary of six dollars a week; ten years later, in her first season as a star, she was to make more than forty thousand dollars.

In 1888 another touring company was heading back East from San Francisco, and Maude was given a small part in the cast. Halfway across the country, the star resigned, and her role went to Maude. Before the New York opening, however, the management engaged another star, and Maude was reduced to a bit as a servant. Though deeply disappointed, she realized her inexperience and set about perfecting the few lines she had been given. On the opening night in New York, even in her tiny role she was so charming that a few critics mentioned her in their reviews.

That fall she joined the acting company headed by E. H. Sothorn, who was later to achieve fame as part of the famous Shakespearean team of Sothorn and Marlowe. By now Maude was sixteen, rather frail in appearance, with long brown hair and large, expressive blue eyes. More and more, her sincerity, grace and delicate skill on stage attracted the attention of audiences. On leaving E. H. Sothorn's company, she obtained a good part in a farce called *A Midnight Bell*.

Then she attracted the attention of producer Charles Frohman, who was already being called "The Star Maker." He saw her potentialities immediately and engaged her as a member of his newly organized stock company, a group of actors he intended to use for several seasons in a number of plays. After two seasons of this apprentice work, she was offered an opportunity far greater than anything she or her

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mother had ever expected.

Frohman had just lured the debonair actor John Drew away from another management. For years Drew had been co-starring with the vivacious Ada Rehan in a series of tremendously popular light comedies. Now Frohman had to find a new leading woman for Drew. He decided to gamble on the talented nineteen-year-old Maude Adams.

The Masked Ball, Frohman's first production starring John Drew, opened on October 3, 1892. It was a triumph for Frohman, for Drew, and, most of all, for Maude Adams. Her role had posed an especially difficult problem: she had to appear on stage as a tipsy woman, and because she was so young this could easily offend the audience, instead of amusing it. She solved the problem brilliantly by making her entrance carrying a long-stemmed rose. She moved steadily, but the rose dipped and bobbed and staggered. There was a tipsy rose, not a tipsy Maude Adams. The critics were delighted; the audience found her irresistible.

For five seasons Maude Adams appeared as John Drew's leading woman while Frohman groomed her for stardom. From the start Frohman was very canny in the way he managed her. Her private life was kept a secret. She never granted interviews. Her public appearances off stage were held to an absolute minimum. This element of mystery aroused the public's curiosity and brought her innumerable mentions in newspapers and magazines. By 1896 Frohman was ready to launch her as a star; all he needed was an appropriate play.

That year the famous Scotch novelist James M. Barrie made his first trip to America. While in New York, he attended a matinee of *Rosemary*, the comedy in which John Drew then was starring with Maude Adams as his leading woman. After the performance Barrie rushed to Frohman and announced that

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he planned to dramatize his novel, *The Little Minister*, as a vehicle for Maude Adams. *The Little Minister* tells of a rather self-righteous young minister in a small village in Scotland, who, much against his will, falls in love with a gay, mischievous girl, Lady Babbie, who has been raised by the gypsies.

The Little Minister, with Maude Adams as star, opened at the Empire Theatre in New York on September 27, 1897. In *Lady Babbie*, Miss Adams found full scope for her captivating talents. She seemed to have a special gift for making Barrie's gentle characters ring gloriously true. The production was a spectacular success: it ran for three hundred consecutive performances and brought in receipts of more than \$370,000, a record for those days. By the end of the run there was no doubt in anyone's mind that Maude Adams was firmly established as a star. A nation-wide tour and several revivals proved equally popular.

The combination of Barrie's whimsical plays and Maude Adams' elfin, elusive charm proved popular again in 1901 with *Quality Street*, in which Miss Adams appeared as Miss Phoebe, a lovely girl who, believing her soldier-sweetheart dead, grows plain and spinsterish, but blossoms again when he reappears.

Then, in 1905, came *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up*. Barrie was so dubious about its chances for commercial success that he offered to give Charles Frohman another play to make up for the probable losses; Maude Adams wanted to play Wendy instead of Peter. Both of them were wrong. *Peter Pan* was Barrie's most successful play and Maude Adams' most famous role.

Peter Pan opened on November 6, 1905, at the Empire Theatre and ran for 223 performances. *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire*, the play Barrie had offered as a recompense for *Peter Pan*, lasted only eighty-nine performances, with Ethel Barrymore

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in the title role.

The highlight of each performance of *Peter Pan* was the moment when Peter, in his desperate attempt to save the life of the fading Tinker Bell, rushed forward to the footlights and asked the audience if they believed in fairies. Children became so familiar with this part of the play that at one performance a little boy stood up in his seat fully fifteen minutes before the proper time and eagerly shouted that *he* believed in fairies.

Between 1905 and 1915 Miss Adams played *Peter Pan* more than 1,500 times, including the original New York run and various revivals and tours.

After *Peter Pan*, the Maude Adams-James M. Barrie combination achieved another success with *What Every Woman Knows* in 1908. In this, Miss Adams appeared as Maggie Wylie, the quick-witted, self-effacing wife who helps her humorless husband to success without ever letting him realize it.

A Kiss for Cinderella, in which Miss Adams starred from 1916 through 1918, was still another hit. Her winsome appeal brought exactly the right touch to the character of Miss Thing, the poor little waif who believes so firmly in the Cinderella legend that it comes true for her. But even Miss Adams' infinite charm and great popularity could not save Barrie's *The Legend of Leonora* and *The Ladies' Shakespeare*; both were failures.

Between her first starring role in 1897 and *A Kiss for Cinderella* in 1916, Miss Adams appeared in a number of plays other than the ones by Barrie. In 1899 she tried *Romeo and Juliet*; her portrayal of Juliet was popular with the public but not with the critics. In the fall of 1900 she played in *L'Aiglon*, the story of Napoleon's ill-fated son, written by the French dramatist Edmond Rostand. To prepare for this role she spent a summer in Europe, where she visited Schoenbrunn, the castle

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near Vienna where L'Aiglon lived out his brief life in virtual imprisonment. In 1911 she did another Rostand play, *Chantecler*, a symbolic drama in which she portrayed a barnyard rooster, feathers and all. The critics had small praise for her performance, although they admitted the play was difficult.

During the periods when she was not performing in New York or on tour, Miss Adams made several trips to Europe; but she never acted outside the United States. In 1901, worn out by illness and fatigue, she spent the summer in almost complete seclusion at a convent near Tours, France. Although not a Catholic, she grew so fond of her small convent cell that she had it reproduced as her bedroom in her New York home at 22 East Forty-First Street. The summer of 1902 she rested in Switzerland; that of 1903 she visited Paris and Egypt. In 1908 and 1909 she studied at Trinity College in Dublin, and in 1910 she made a quick trip to France to do some research for her appearance in *Chantecler*.

By 1915 Maude Adams was probably the most popular actress in America. Whether or not the critics liked her performances, her public seemed to feel that she could do no wrong. Young and old alike were entranced by her elfin quality; even Taft, when he was President, had kept her picture in his study at the White House.

Her air of mystery remained. When she appeared on the street, she usually was dressed in dark browns or grays. She was now forty-two, unmarried, with many years of unceasing hard work behind her, and, by choice, only a handful of friends.

Then, in less than a year, the three people dearest to her died. First was Charles Frohman, who went down with the *Lusitania* when it was torpedoed off Ireland on May 7, 1915; in December her grandmother died; and in March, 1916, her mother died. After these personal tragedies she made a valiant

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effort to resume her theatrical career, but while on tour with *A Kiss for Cinderella* in 1918, she was stricken with influenza, then sweeping the country in a dreadful epidemic.

Illness, grief and exhaustion forced her into what she thought would be a temporary retirement. She knew that Barrie was writing a new play, *Mary Rose*, and she planned to return to the stage in it in 1920. But with Charles Frohman gone, she discovered that those who had taken over his interests had inserted a clause in her new contract requiring that she abandon her rights in the other Barrie plays. She refused to sign. *Mary Rose* was presented with a young actress named Ruth Chatterton in the title role; it was only mildly successful. Maude Adams never again appeared on the stage of a New York theatre.

Retirement did not mean inactivity. For two years in the early 1920's she had her own laboratory at the General Electric plant in Schenectady, New York, where she experimented with lamps to be used in color photography. Then she became interested in filming *Kim*, Rudyard Kipling's novel of India; she also tried to persuade Barrie to write the script for a travelogue; but neither film was ever made. In 1926 and 1927 the *Ladies' Home Journal* published her autobiography.

There were a few attempts to return to acting. In 1930 she went to Hollywood to work on the script for a motion picture in which she hoped to appear. In the winter of 1931 to 1932 she toured the country as Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*; the production came to Newark but never played in New York City. In 1934 she did a series of radio broadcasts of her famous roles and then played Maria in *Twelfth Night* on the summer theatre circuit.

In 1937, at sixty-four, she joined the faculty at Stephens College, a junior college for girls at Columbia, Missouri, where

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she taught or served as advisor until 1950, when she retired to her home at Tannersville, New York. There, early in 1953, she was stricken with pleurisy; her resistance was seriously weakened, and she died on July 17, 1953, at eighty. Throughout the thirty-five years of her retirement she remained as elusive as she had been during her years as America's best-loved actress. To the very end she was an enigma, even to those few who knew her best.

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George M. Cohan

1878-1942

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George M. Cohan

George M. Cohan

1878-1942

"MY MOTHER thanks you, my father thanks you, my sister thanks you, and I thank you."

A brash young man of eighteen made this speech one afternoon late in 1896 on the stage of Hyde and Behman's Adams Street Theatre in Brooklyn. At that time, Hyde and Behman's was the goal of every vaudeville act; an appearance there practically assured engagements at other first-rate vaudeville houses.

George M. Cohan, the young man who thanked the audience, had good reason to be grateful. The Four Cohans—composed of his mother, father, sister and himself—had been a last-minute substitute for another act. They had been given the opening spot on the program, the traditional place, as the audience knew, for the act the management considered weakest. Yet, despite these handicaps, The Four Cohans had scored a resounding hit. George and his family were jubilant because the future now looked so bright.

George M. Cohan (pronounced Co-HAN, accenting the last syllable), actor, playwright, director, producer, as well as composer and lyricist of more than five hundred songs, including "Over There" and "The Grand Old Flag," always claimed the Fourth of July as his birthday. Actually, he was born just a few hours before midnight on July 3, 1878, in

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Providence, Rhode Island. His parents, Jerry and Helen Cohan, who already had a two-year-old daughter, Josephine, returned to their work as vaudeville performers soon after George's birth. While still a small infant, George made his first stage appearance, carried by his father in a vaudeville sketch.

Growing up in the free-and-easy atmosphere backstage in theatres, George developed into a brash and unruly child. He argued with stage managers; he even argued with the stars of the programs; as a result, his parents lost a number of jobs. Every attempt to send him to school was a fiasco. At eight, for example, he was sent to stay with friends of the Cohans in Orange, New Jersey, where he could attend classes regularly; within three weeks the friends rushed him back to his parents. This was the end of his education. Twenty years later, in an article he wrote for *Theatre Magazine*, he boasted that he had read only three books: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Innocents Abroad*. Whether or not this was true, young George had much in common with both Tom and Huck.

When George joined his parents after his disgrace in Orange, they were touring in a melodrama called *Daniel Boone on the Trail*. On reaching each new town, George, dressed in a cowboy suit, had to ride a donkey through the streets in a parade announcing the arrival of the actors. At every performance he had two jobs—selling song books and playing second fiddle in the orchestra. Even so, he still had time to get into one scrape after another.

At nine, George made his formal stage debut playing the violin in a specialty number. Soon he developed a comedy routine in which he appeared as "The Lively Bootblack."

In the spring of 1889, the family, now called The Cohan Mirth-Makers, had considerable success in smaller towns with

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a vaudeville sketch written by Jerry Cohan called "Goggles' Doll House." By now George was trying his hand at writing sketches; although Jerry always turned them down, he encouraged George to try again.

1891 brought George the chance to play the title role in *Peck's Bad Boy* at a Brooklyn theatre; he thought it was a splendid opportunity. Consisting of loosely-connected slapstick episodes, *Peck's Bad Boy* centered on the exploits of an incorrigible (but, said the program, good-hearted) boy, who made life unbearable for his father, for a pawnbroker, a storekeeper and many others. At the opening performance George played the role to the hilt; but after the performance he found a gang of children lying in wait for him in the alley by the stage door. They all had seen *Peck's Bad Boy* many times before, and it had become a neighborhood tradition to fight with the "Bad Boy." George soon developed into a swift runner.

In the next few years The Four Cohans played many engagements: thirty-five weeks with a troupe in Buffalo, New York; seventeen weeks touring in a farce called *April Fool*; sixteen weeks of one-night stands with a German comedian; and numerous other short-lived ventures.

By now George had composed and sold several songs, starting with a number called "Why Did Nellie Leave Her Home?" He had also written and sold several vaudeville sketches; and, as a member of The Four Cohans, he had developed an exaggerated comic dance routine called an "eccentric dance."

Then, in 1896, The Four Cohans made their big success in Brooklyn at Hyde and Behman's. "My mother thanks you, my father thanks you, my sister thanks you, and I thank you" became a standard speech for George in the years that followed. George, now business manager for his family, also began writ-

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ing all their sketch material.

Under his management The Four Cohans were steadily employed: there was a tour with a group called "Hyde's Comedians," an appearance in New York at the famous Tony Pastor's vaudeville house on Union Square, a tour with another popular troupe known as "Vesta Tilley's All-Star Vaudeville."

While the Vesta Tilley group was playing in Chicago in 1898, George met a Scotch-Irish singing-comedienne named Ethel Levey. They were married in July, 1899, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, then and for many years afterwards a very popular spot with theatre people. The marriage was not a success. They had one child, Georgette; Ethel Levey appeared with the Cohans in several productions; but she and George were divorced in 1907.

Meanwhile, in 1901, George M. Cohan, not yet twenty-three, wrote a three-act musical farce called *The Governor's Son*; cast his mother, father, sister, wife and himself in important parts; persuaded L. C. Behman or Hyde and Behman's in Brooklyn to finance the production; and opened it at a New York theatre. This was the Cohans' first appearance in a legitimate theatre instead of in a vaudeville house.

Although not a success in New York, *The Governor's Son* was both popular and profitable on tour. In 1903 George brought his whole family back to New York City in his new musical comedy, *Running for Office*; it ran for only forty-eight performances. Like *The Governor's Son*, however, it was a success on tour. These two failures in New York did not discourage George; his ego was bolstered when one of his songs, "Always Leave Them Laughing When You Say Good-bye," became a nation-wide hit.

Then, in 1904, George M. Cohan met a brilliant, dynamic young man named Sam Harris. On the Sunday after their first

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meeting, while they were coming back from a baseball game on Staten Island, they decided to become partners and produce plays. From this casual decision emerged one of the most successful producing teams in the history of the American theatre.

One of their first ventures was *Little Johnny Jones*, which opened in New York on November 7, 1904. Sam Harris was listed as the producer, presenting George M. Cohan in his first starring role. George M. Cohan wrote the book, lyrics and music; George M. Cohan directed; and Jerry Cohan, Helen Cohan, and Ethel Levey Cohan were featured in the cast. The only Cohan missing was George's sister Josephine, now married and touring with her actor-husband.

Even though *Little Johnny Jones* included such songs as "Give My Regards to Broadway" and "The Yankee Doodle Boy," it did poor business for its fifty-two performances in New York. George M. Cohan was furious: he moved the production to Philadelphia, where it was a great hit. Then he brought it back to New York for another engagement; this time, the New York public flocked to the performances.

After *Little Johnny Jones*, Cohan became more and more successful. His musical comedies, although not always popular with the critics, set a new style in pace and form. His plays set a fashion for swift-running comedy. Cohan attributed his success to the fact that he frequently started rehearsals with only the first act written and completed the show as rehearsals progressed. He directed and acted in most of his own plays; in addition, he rewrote many pieces by other playwrights.

Among the musicals and plays he wrote between 1904 and 1919 were: *Forty-Five Minutes from Broadway* (with such songs as "Mary Is a Grand Old Name" and "So Long Mary"), *George Washington, Jr.* (with "The Grand Old Flag"), *The Talk of New York* (with "When a Fellow's on the Level with

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a *Girl That's on the Square*" and "Under Any Old Flag at All"), *Fifty Miles from Boston* (with "When We Are M-a-double-r-i-e-d" and "Harrigan"), *The Yankee Prince*, *The Man Who Owns Broadway*, *Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford*, *Broadway Jones*, *Seven Keys to Baldpate* (a mystery farce, one of Cohan's greatest successes), *Hello Broadway*, *Hit-the-Trail-Holliday* (another big success), *The Cohan Revue of 1916* (and *The Cohan Revue of 1918*, which he described as "A hit and run play batted out by George M. Cohan") and *A Prince There Was*.

For a long time the critics associated Cohan so closely with vaudeville that they failed to recognize his acting abilities. However, as time passed, they came to realize that his breezy, swaggering style and his straight-faced delivery of comic lines contributed immeasurably to the success of his plays. Gradually his reputation as a comedian grew, although there were numerous dissenters. The controversy was summed up in a 1914 magazine article: "Is George M. Cohan to be Regarded as a Joke or a Genius?" More a genius than a joke, the article concluded.

By 1919 George M. Cohan was one of the most successful men in the American theatre. He had written and acted in many hit plays; with Sam Harris, he had produced many hits by other playwrights. His songs were extremely popular, especially one he dashed off in a few hours in 1917: "Over There." His second marriage, in 1907, to Agnes Nolan, was a happy one; they had two daughters, Helen and Mary, and a son, George, Jr. In 1911 he had built a theatre in New York City and named it after himself. A good many people in the Manhattan neighborhood known as "Broadway" all but idolized him for his generosity. Five-foot-six, with a wiry figure, humorous blue eyes, and hair shot with gray, he was a familiar

and popular figure throughout America.

Then, on August 7, 1919, Actors' Equity Association, the actors' union, called a strike. Equity sought to have theatre managers recognize it as the bargaining agent for actors, which, up to then, the managers had refused to do. Twelve productions closed right away; one of them was Cohan's presentation of *The Royal Vagabond*. Cohan was infuriated, and, though he had been an actor all his life, took the side of the managers against Equity. He reopened *The Royal Vagabond* with himself in a starring role. He made countless public—and violent—statements against Equity. He was instrumental in the organization of the Actors' Fidelity League, a group opposed to Equity (and a group that was dissolved soon after the end of the strike). In protest against the strike he resigned from both the Lambs and the Friars, two famous theatrical clubs.

But the public and the majority of the stars sympathized with Equity. By September, twenty-three plays had closed, and on September 6 the strike ended. Equity was victorious; George M. Cohan never recovered from his bitterness. He announced his retirement; in July, 1920, he dissolved his partnership with Sam Harris.

However, he soon was active again; in the next thirteen years he wrote many plays and produced many by other authors. Although he had some success, the critics and the public now regarded his work as sentimental and unsophisticated. The Cohan vogue seemed to have passed; there were more failures than hits.

Then, in 1933, Eugene O'Neill sent the Theatre Guild the script of *Ah, Wilderness!*, a comedy about an adolescent boy in a small Connecticut town in 1906. One of the chief roles in the play was Nat Miller, the boy's father, a wise, kind, shrewd and humorous man. Theresa Helburn, a member of

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the board of directors of the Theatre Guild, had an inspiration. She offered the part to George M. Cohan, and he accepted. For the first time since leaving vaudeville, he appeared in a play that he had not either written or re-written; it was a triumph for him. Critics who had belittled his talents as an actor in his own plays acclaimed him in O'Neill's comedy. A number of reviewers hailed him as "The dean of American comedy." *Ah, Wilderness!* did thriving business for a full season in New York and repeated its success on tour. Once out of New York, however, Cohan began elaborating his performance, using long pauses after certain comic lines to emphasize their humor. By the end of the tour each performance was running more than twenty minutes longer than in New York.

After the closing of *Ah, Wilderness!*, he wrote and produced a comedy called *Dear Old Darling* in the spring of 1936; it was withdrawn at the end of two weeks. Cohan sailed for a vacation in Ireland; returned to America to join forces with Sam Harris once again for the production of a comedy, *Fulton of Oak Falls*, in which he starred for its brief engagement; and then sailed for London in April, 1937.

He soon was summoned back for the leading role in a musical play written by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart, with music by Richard Rodgers and lyrics by Lorenz Hart. Once again George M. Cohan appeared in a production he had not written; once again he achieved astounding success as an actor. The play was *I'd Rather Be Right*, and George M. Cohan portrayed President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The New York engagement and subsequent tour of *I'd Rather Be Right* kept Cohan occupied until February, 1939. His role probably brought him greater publicity and acclaim than anything else he had ever done. Yet the fact that credit for the play and music had to go, not to George M. Cohan, but

GEORGE M. COHAN

to Kaufman, the two Harts, and Rodgers seemed to be a constant source of irritation.

In the fall of 1939 he appeared briefly in Baltimore and Washington in the tryout of a new comedy by Sidney Howard, *Madam, Will You Walk?*, and in 1940 a play of his own, *The Return of the Vagabond*, was a quick failure. The following year he spent in retirement.

On November 5, 1942, he died at the age of sixty-four, tired and discouraged, feeling that both he and everything he had done were hopelessly outdated. Yet he left behind a prodigious number of plays and musical comedies; hundreds of songs, including the rousing "Over There" and "The Grand Old Flag"; and the lasting memory of his superb performances in *Ah, Wilderness!* and *I'd Rather Be Right*.

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Alfred Lunt

1892 -

Lynn Fontanne

1892 -

-



Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Alfred Lunt

1892 -

Lynn Fontanne

1892 -

ON THE very last night of their 452-performance New York run in *O Mistress Mine*, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne were overheard deep in conversation backstage, discussing how they could play a scene in the second act of the comedy more effectively. They still were polishing their performances, even after having done *O Mistress Mine* in the English provinces and in London, throughout the G.I. camps in Europe, and for many months in New York. Regarded as the foremost acting team on the American stage today, the Lunts, with their constant search for perfection, have achieved an unparalleled brilliance of stage technique.

Alfred Lunt was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on August 19, 1892, the son of Harriet Briggs Lunt and Alfred Lunt, Sr., a lumberman who died when his son was two. Mrs. Lunt later married a Finnish doctor, Karl Sederholm. After attending a Milwaukee high school and Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin, Alfred was sent to Boston in 1912 to enroll in the Emerson School of Oratory. Instead, he joined

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the acting company at Boston's Castle Square Theatre at a salary of five dollars a week.

In 1914 he joined the touring company of an actress named Margaret Anglin, then toured the vaudeville circuits with comedienne Laura Hope Crews, and, late in 1916, became the leading man in a vaudeville sketch starring the aging Lillie Langtry, in her youth a famous English beauty. In the sketch Lunt played the man with whom Mrs. Langtry was in love; since Lunt was only twenty-four and Lillie Langtry was in her sixties, the sketch proved more amusing than intended.

He made his Broadway debut on October 17, 1917, in a short-lived comedy, *Romance and Arabella*, and in the spring of 1918 went on tour with Booth Tarkington's *The Country Cousin*. Tarkington saw his performance in Boston and was so impressed that he told the young Lunt he would write a play especially for his talents.

Tarkington kept his word; *Clarence*, the comedy he wrote, was a delightful piece about a young entomologist, just out of the army, who is hired as a handyman by a scatterbrained family and becomes their guiding light. It called for one talent Lunt did not possess: playing the saxophone. His attempts to practice the instrument during rehearsals kept the other members of the cast, including eighteen-year-old Helen Hayes, in an uproar.

When *Clarence* opened in New York on September 20, 1919, the audience greeted it with wild enthusiasm; the actors took more than twenty curtain calls. The next morning the critics hailed *Clarence* as the great American comedy; it ran for two years in New York and on tour.

Alfred Lunt's next big success was in January, 1924, as the young ne'er-do-well, Tom Prior, in Sutton Vane's *Outward Bound*, the drama about a group of people aboard an

ALFRED LUNT AND LYNN FONTANNE

ocean liner who find they are bound for the hereafter. By the time of *Outward Bound* he had met and married Lynn Fontanne.

Miss Fontanne was born Lily Louise Fontanne on December 6, 1892, in Woodford, Essex, England, the daughter of Frances Ellen and Jules Fontanne, a Frenchman who was a type designer. When eleven years old, she was taken by a friend to audition for Dame Ellen Terry, one of England's greatest actresses. Impressed by the girl, Dame Ellen coached her for two years and then was instrumental in helping her obtain a part in *Cinderella* at London's Drury Lane Theatre in December, 1905. Tradition has it that young Lynn played a fairy dangling on the end of a wire.

For the next few years she played a variety of small parts in London and on tours of the English provinces; in 1910 she came to the United States in a farce called *Mr. Preedy and the Countess*, which opened in New York on November 7 and closed three weeks later. Miss Fontanne returned to England.

In London she gained an increasing reputation for skillful performances in character roles. Laurette Taylor, the American actress who had scored a resounding success both in New York and London in *Peg O' My Heart*, liked one of Miss Fontanne's performances so much that she brought her back to America for supporting roles in several plays, starting in the spring of 1916. Alfred Lunt first saw her in *The Wooing of Eve*, which opened in New York on November 9, 1917.

They did not actually meet until the late spring of 1919, at rehearsals in a New York theatre for a summer production in Washington, D.C. When introduced, Lunt made a gallant attempt to kiss Miss Fontanne's hand, but lost his balance and fell flat on his face. Although the Washington production closed at the end of a week, by that time their friendship was

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well established.

After *Clarence* opened in New York, Miss Fontanne frequently ventured backstage at the theatre to visit Mr. Lunt, despite the jealous glances of the young actresses in the cast. In the spring of 1920 she appeared in the Philadelphia production of Eugene O'Neill's *Chris* (which he later rewrote as *Anna Christie*, the Pulitzer Prize winner); then she returned to England for a play with Laurette Taylor. On the opening night in London, a riot broke out in the balcony, reportedly started by troublemakers paid by an English actress whose wrath Miss Taylor had aroused. Lynn Fontanne soon was back in the United States.

Then came *Dulcy*, a comedy written especially for Miss Fontanne by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly. *Dulcy* had its New York premiere on February 21, 1921; as *Dulcinea*, the feather-brained heroine, Miss Fontanne was one of the big hits of the season. Fifteen months later, on May 26, 1922, she and Alfred Lunt were married.

Although they both appeared in a benefit revival of *Sweet Nell of Old Drury* in 1923, their first great success as a team was in *The Guardsman* the following year. This comedy was produced by the Theatre Guild, which had been formed in 1919 by several members of an experimental group, the Washington Square Players; from *The Guardsman* on, the Theatre Guild was to have a hand in nearly all the productions in which the Lunts appeared.

The Guardsman, Ferenc Molnar's comedy about a jealous actor who disguises himself as a Cossack soldier and makes love to his own wife, opened in New York on October 13, 1924. The Lunts gave a dazzling comic performance which took both critics and audience by surprise. Mr. Lunt in *Clarence* and Miss Fontanne in *Dulcy* had each been uproarious, but their

ALFRED LUNT AND LYNN FONTANNE

playing as a team had a brilliance which neither had achieved separately.

In the years that followed they had an almost unbroken succession of hits, many of which they did in London as well as in New York and on tour throughout the United States. With each of these their acting virtuosity and their popularity increased. They did Shaw's *Arms and the Man* in 1925 and *The Doctor's Dilemma* in 1927, Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen* in 1930, Robert E. Sherwood's *Reunion in Vienna* in 1931 and *Idiot's Delight* in 1936, Noel Coward's *Design for Living* in 1933, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1935, and, in 1938, S. N. Behrman's adaptation of *Amphitryon 38* by Jean Giraudoux.

Brooks Atkinson's review in *The New York Times* of *The Taming of the Shrew* is typical of the critical acclaim they received: ". . . Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne were pouncing on *The Taming of the Shrew* and playing it in the Guild Theatre like a game of ninepins. . . . Here are the actors who have more gusto for every sort of stage hocus-pocus than any other performers on the American bulletin boards."

The Lunts acted separately in several productions in 1926 and separated as actors again in 1928 when Mr. Lunt played in O'Neill's *Marco Millions* and Miss Fontanne in O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*. Performances of *Strange Interlude* began at four thirty, recessed for dinner and continued until after eleven at night; Mr. Lunt is reported to have said that if the performance had lasted two hours longer he could have sued for divorce on the grounds of desertion. Since 1928 they have always acted together.

They went to Hollywood to make the motion picture version of *The Guardsman* in 1931; since then they have resisted the temptation to make another film, except for a brief

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appearance in *Stage Door Canteen* in 1943. The story is told that Mr. and Mrs. Lunt turned down one Hollywood offer of one million dollars by saying that they could be bought but not bored.

In 1940 Robert E. Sherwood's *There Shall Be No Night* brought the Lunts one of their greatest successes; it won Sherwood a Pulitzer Prize. This drama of a Finnish scientist and his American wife caught up in Finland's resistance to Russia opened in New York on April 29, 1940, and played to capacity audiences until the fall. The following spring the Lunts played it in nearly fifty cities in nineteen states and two Canadian provinces; in the fall they toured again, playing mostly one-night stands throughout the South and the Middle West. At the height of the Battle of Britain, they took the play to England, opening in London on December 15, 1943, after a tour of the provinces. At times the scenery shook so badly from bomb explosions in the vicinity of the theatre that the Lunts had to prop up the sets while saying their lines.

During the midst of the V-2 raids the Lunts switched to a comedy, Terence Rattigan's *Love in Idleness* (later to be called *O Mistress Mine*); it opened in London late in 1944. In the summer of 1945, after touring the army camps in Europe, the Lunts returned to their Wisconsin farm for a much-needed rest.

The farm at Genesee Depot, twenty-eight miles west of Milwaukee, was bought by Mr. Lunt as a young man; it now includes nearly 160 acres. The Lunts have spent most of their summers there, living in a gaily-painted replica of a Swedish farmhouse which has an ultra-modern kitchen where Mr. Lunt performs as an excellent chef. On the farm he is an early riser and an energetic worker.

After doing *O Mistress Mine* in New York and on tour

ALFRED LUNT AND LYNN FONTANNE

from late 1945 well into 1949, the Lunts then played in S. N. Behrman's *I Know My Love* until 1951. This rather weak comedy about fifty years in the life of a married couple was redeemed by the Lunts' superb performances. Their skillful technique also saved Noel Coward's *Quadrille*, which they played in England and the United States from 1952 through March, 1955; Lunt appeared as a blunt American railroad baron of the late 1870's and Miss Fontanne as a beautiful English aristocrat. The Lunts' flair for elegant buffoonery rescued still another comedy, *The Great Sebastians*, in which they portrayed a pair of vaudevillians with a mind-reading act who become entangled with the Communists in Prague. They acted in this from late 1955 until 1957 and then used it as the vehicle for their television debut.

Usually the Lunts have appeared in plays in which the two leading characters fight an affectionate verbal duel in a spirit of glittering sophistication and great good fun; yet they can also range from savage satire to deep tragedy. They have a strong sense of obligation to the theatre-going public and demand absolute perfection from themselves and from all those who work with them. Mr. Lunt is the more excitable of the two; Miss Fontanne exerts a soothing influence. Both in their manner and appearance on stage they express the essence of sophistication. Six feet tall, with brown eyes and gray hair, Mr. Lunt has a distinctive voice which projects easily to the last row of the balcony. The brown-eyed Miss Fontanne, who started her career as an unglamorous character actress, is now regarded as one of the greatest beauties on the stage; one of her most charming characteristics is her graceful, gliding walk.

In 1958 the Lunts began playing *The Visit* in England. This grim and terrifying drama by Friedrich Duerrenmatt presented Miss Fontanne as a cigar-smoking, fantastically

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wealthy European who returns to her native village to avenge herself on the man, portrayed by Mr. Lunt, who had seduced her in her youth. With *The Visit*, on May 5, 1958, the Lunts reopened a New York theatre formerly called the Globe, which had been completely refurbished and re-named the Lunt-Fontanne. This opulent, glittering theatre is a fitting namesake for the foremost acting couple on our stage, if not in the entire history of the theatre, a couple who, for more than three-and-a-half decades, have given audiences performances unsurpassed in beauty, charm, wit and gaiety.

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Katharine Cornell

1898 -

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FAMOUS AMERICAN ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

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Katharine Cornell

1898 -

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Katharine Cornell as Elizabeth Barrett
in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*

Katharine Cornell

1898-

IN 1930 a young actress made a bold decision: to produce the plays in which she acted, and to produce only plays of real dramatic merit instead of mere commercial appeal. In addition, she planned to recruit the finest actors and actresses for her company and to take her productions on tour from coast to coast.

Because she announced this program when the United States was in the midst of the worst depression in its history, few people thought she would achieve anything but financial disaster. But the actress-manager, Katharine Cornell, stood firm in her belief that a good play with a good cast would attract a good audience.

Miss Cornell's faith in herself and in the American public proved justified. Her first production, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, ran for a full year in New York; on tour it played successful engagements in towns no theatrical company had visited in years.

Katharine Cornell was born on February 16, 1898, in Berlin, Germany, where her American father, Dr. Peter Cornell, was taking a post-graduate course in surgery. Six months later, Dr. Cornell, his wife Alice, and their infant daughter returned home to Buffalo, New York.

Kit, as the girl was nicknamed, was an awkward, self-

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conscious tomboy. At first she showed no interest in acting, even when her father abandoned the practice of medicine and became part owner and manager of a Buffalo theatre. Then she attended a performance of James M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, with the famous Maude Adams starred. From that day on, she knew she wanted to be an actress.

At that time Jessie Bonstelle, an actress-director, would bring a company of actors to Mr. Cornell's theatre every year to appear in a series of plays. Day after day Kit watched the rehearsals of this "stock" company, as it was called. A few years later Miss Bonstelle was to be responsible for launching Katharine Cornell's acting career.

When she was fifteen, Kit went to boarding school in Mamaroneck, New York, where, as part of her studies, she wrote plays, directed them, designed sets, and acted. The school faculty occasionally asked someone from the Washington Square Players in New York City to come to Mamaroneck to coach the students; the Washington Square Players, which later evolved into the Theatre Guild, was a group comparable to the "Off-Broadway" producing organizations today. One member of this group was so impressed with young Kit that he suggested she get in touch with him if she ever came to New York City for a career in the theatre.

This was all the encouragement needed; in 1916 Kit arrived in New York City. No one among the Washington Square Players paid much attention to the eager young girl until the day an actress failed to appear to rehearse her role in a one-act play called *Bushido*. Kit was given the part, that of a Japanese mother, and made her New York stage debut with a four-word speech: "My son, my son."

Later that season she had a slightly more important role in the Washington Square Players' *Plots and Playwrights*. A

KATHARINE CORNELL

young talent scout for an important producer saw her in this and noted on his program: "Interesting, monotonous, watch." The young man was Guthrie McClintic, later to become Miss Cornell's husband.

After two seasons with the Washington Square Players, Miss Cornell was engaged by Jessie Bonstelle for thirty-two weeks of stock in Buffalo and New York during the spring and summer of 1918. A different play was presented each week for ten performances. In addition, the actors rehearsed another play for the following week. It was exhausting work, but gave Kit an excellent opportunity to learn the craft of acting.

In the fall, on returning to New York, Miss Bonstelle got Kit a part in a play starring Grace George, a clever comedienne. At the first rehearsal Kit was nervous and read her part badly; Miss George suggested that perhaps she was miscast. In tears, Kit handed her script to the stage manager and left the theatre. Only later did she learn that Miss George had meant her comment as criticism, not dismissal; but by then the role had been given to another actress.

Jessie Bonstelle did not lose faith. She persuaded Grace George's husband, producer William A. Brady, to hire Kit for the touring company of a popular melodrama, *The Man Who Came Back*. Her role was that of a cabaret singer who became a dope addict. Although Miss Cornell had never encountered such a person, she gave a convincing performance.

After *The Man Who Came Back* and another season in stock in Buffalo and Detroit, Miss Cornell was taken to England by Jessie Bonstelle to play Jo, the tomboyish heroine of *Little Women*. The play, enthusiastically received by the English critics, ran for three months in London during the winter of 1919; Miss Cornell then returned to America.

In the spring of 1920 Miss Bonstelle assembled her stock

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company for the coming summer at William A. Brady's office in the Playhouse Theatre in New York. Guthrie McClintic, who had been hired as an actor-director, saw Katharine Cornell there and announced to a friend that she was the woman he planned to marry. The wedding took place on September 8 of the following year, 1921.

When she was married, Katharine Cornell had just finished playing in *Nice People*, a comedy presented for six months in New York, and was rehearsing the role of Sydney Fairfield in Clemence Dane's *A Bill of Divorcement*. *A Bill of Divorcement* and four other plays opened in New York on October 10, 1921. Only two of the important critics attended the premiere of the Clemence Dane drama, and their reviews were unfavorable. Business was poor and closing imminent when Alexander Woolcott, an influential and outspoken critic, was persuaded to attend a performance. He jumped to the defense of the play and heaped praise on Miss Cornell. Within a few days *A Bill of Divorcement* had become one of the biggest hits in New York.

Sydney Fairfield is young, gay, intense and doomed: she discovers, almost on the eve of her marriage, that there is hereditary insanity in her family. Miss Cornell's performance established her as one of the leading younger actresses.

During 1923 and 1924 Katharine Cornell received excellent critical notices for her performances in seven different plays, each of which ran only briefly. The last of these was a revival of Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, presented for a series of special matinees during the 1924 Christmas season. *Candida* was to be one of Miss Cornell's most popular roles; she revived the play on four different occasions for successful engagements.

1925 brought a lurid melodrama adapted from a best-selling novel, *The Green Hat*. Miss Cornell portrayed the

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glamorous but ill-fated Iris March, the epitome of the daring "flapper" of the 'Twenties; Guthrie McClintic directed the production. When *The Green Hat* opened in New York on September 15, 1925, the critics ridiculed the play, but acclaimed Miss Cornell. *The Green Hat* ran for seven months in New York and for more than a year on tour; it brought Katharine Cornell stardom.

Three successes followed: Somerset Maugham's *The Letter*; *The Age of Innocence*, a dramatization of Edith Wharton's well-known novel; and *Dishonored Lady*, based on a famous murder case in Glasgow in the nineteenth century. Then Miss Cornell made her debut as an actress-manager with *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, which had its New York premiere on February 9, 1931.

This dramatization of the romance between Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning was a triumph. The original production ran in New York until February 13, 1932, and then toured across the country to San Francisco. Miss Cornell has revived it several times since then, most notably for a tour of the front lines in Italy and France during World War II. In 1956 the play served as a vehicle for her television debut. In all, she has appeared as Elizabeth Barrett more than one thousand times.

After two relatively unsuccessful productions, *Lucrece* and *Alien Corn*, Miss Cornell decided to take *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *Candida* and *Romeo and Juliet* on an ambitious twenty-nine-week cross-country tour, lasting from November, 1933, to June, 1934. At that time most theatrical producers were saying that "the road" (that is, cities and towns outside of New York) was dead, that the only place a stage attraction could hope to draw an audience was in New York or, perhaps, in Chicago, Boston and Philadelphia. Miss Cornell's

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tour covered nearly 17,000 miles; 225 performances were given in seventy-five cities and towns.

The company found "the road" anything but dead. On Christmas day, 1933, for example, their train was delayed by a flood and did not reach Seattle until after eleven at night. The theatre manager was at the station to tell them that the audience, which had arrived for an eight-thirty performance, was still waiting patiently. The actors rushed to the theatre; the stage hands began setting up the scenery in full view of the audience; and the performance began shortly after one o'clock. At four o'clock in the morning the final curtain went down, amid thunderous applause.

Following a summer's rest at the end of her tour, Miss Cornell undertook a second production of *Romeo and Juliet*, which opened in New York on December 20, 1934, after engagements in Buffalo and Detroit. The critics felt that her Juliet was as great as the Juliets of Julia Marlowe and Jane Cowl, two famous actresses who had scored tremendous successes in the role. Miss Cornell was now established as an actress of the first rank.

Since then, her performances, most of which have been directed by Guthrie McClintic, have constantly increased her stature, both as an actress and as a manager. In 1941 her production of Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* had the longest run this play ever achieved in America. The 230 performances in New York and on tour of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* in 1942 established an American record for any Chekhov play. Her 1947 production of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* broke still another record for total performances.

Among her other distinguished productions have been Shaw's *Saint Joan* in 1936, S. N. Behrman's *No Time for Comedy* in 1939, an adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* in

KATHARINE CORNELL

1946, and Christopher Fry's *The Dark Is Light Enough* in 1955 and *The Firstborn* in 1958. In 1953 she appeared in *The Prescott Proposals*, which she did not produce. During 1959 she made an extensive tour, prior to a New York run in the spring of 1960, in *Dear Liar*, based on the famous correspondence between Bernard Shaw and the highly emotional actress, Mrs. Patrick Campbell.

In her productions Miss Cornell has always had her name placed last on the list of players. Her modesty and her courtesy to the other members of her acting company have made her as popular with her co-workers as she is with the theatre-going public. Typical is an incident connected with her 1951 production of Somerset Maugham's comedy, *The Constant Wife*. As one of the stars of this production, she engaged Grace George, who had expressed such doubts about Miss Cornell's ability thirty-four years before. Miss George, still an expert comedienne, was in her late seventies; her eyesight was failing. On tour and in New York Miss Cornell personally made every effort to see that the elderly actress was comfortable and happy.

Miss Cornell's impressive record reflects the results of years of unceasing hard work in which most of her energies have been devoted to making her productions as nearly perfect as possible. Her marriage to Guthrie McClintic has been a happy partnership, both in the theatre and in private life. Mr. McClintic's casting and direction of the plays have contributed immeasurably to their success. Of great assistance, too, have been Gertrude Macy and Stanley Gilkey, who have worked on the Cornell-McClintic productions for more than thirty years.

In private life the McClintics have lived quietly, first on Beekman Place in New York City, and now at Sneden's Landing, New York, on the Hudson River. Innumerable dachs-

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hunds usually live with them. On their rare vacations from theatre work they have made several trips abroad; they now own a summer home, "Chip Chop," on Martha's Vineyard, an island off the Massachusetts coast.

Five-and-a-half-feet tall, with brown eyes deeply set in an unusually striking face, Miss Cornell today is regarded as one of the greatest actresses the American theatre has known, notable especially for the depth of understanding she imparts in her characterizations. It has been three decades since the words "Katharine Cornell Presents" first introduced the production of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. They have been distinguished years for Miss Cornell and for the American theatre she has served.

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Helen Hayes

1900 -

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Helen Hayes as Mary, Queen of Scots

Helen Hayes

1900-

ON NOVEMBER 26, 1955, a newly remodeled theatre opened in New York City, named for one of America's foremost actresses: Helen Hayes. This was the first time since 1928, when the Ethel Barrymore Theatre was dedicated, that an actress had been given such recognition. It was a fitting honor for Miss Hayes. Since her professional debut at nine in the musical comedy, *Old Dutch*, her memorable characterizations had ranged from Cleopatra to Harriet Beecher Stowe; from the sub-deb, Bab, to the eighty-year-old Queen Victoria.

Catherine Hayes Brown, Helen's mother, was determined that her daughter, born on October 10, 1900, in Washington, D.C., should become an actress. Her husband, Francis van Arnum Brown, a salesman in the wholesale meat-packing business, thought the notion a bit far-fetched, but offered no strenuous objections. At five, Helen started to school in Washington; she also began attending dancing classes and for two weeks in the summer acted in children's roles for a local theatrical group.

Each year the dancing class gave a special matinee performance at a Washington theatre; when Helen was seven, she appeared as a Gibson Girl, named after the stylish models drawn by artist Charles Dana Gibson. Among the audience at this matinee was the famous musical comedy star, Lew

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Fields; he was so captivated by Helen's imitation that he wrote a note to the theatre manager praising the little girl.

The following summer Mrs. Brown took Helen to New York and began making the rounds of producers' offices. No one showed the slightest interest in the small child. Then, with her money running low, Mrs. Brown remembered the note Lew Fields had written. When she and Helen appeared at his office, he was delighted to see them; a contract was drawn up on the spot for Helen to appear in his next musical comedy, *Old Dutch*, which had its New York premiere on November 22, 1909.

After *Old Dutch*, Helen played in three more musicals for Lew Fields and in 1912 returned to Washington to resume the life of an ordinary schoolchild. In 1914 she was called back to New York for a small part in *The Prodigal Husband*, a new comedy starring the debonair John Drew. Helen appeared as the little girl who grows up to be the woman Mr. Drew loves. *The Prodigal Husband* was not a success in New York; soon it was sent on tour, closing in Washington just before Helen's fifteenth birthday.

For the next few years Helen had great difficulty in obtaining a part. She had outgrown children's roles, but because of her tiny size (even today she is only five feet tall), producers were wary of casting her as a girl her own age or older. Finally, in 1917, she was hired for the title role in the touring company of *Pollyanna*, a play based on Eleanor H. Porter's novel about the little girl who brings sweetness and light into the life of everyone she encounters. By the end of the nine-month tour, Helen was heartily tired of the constantly glad and good Pollyanna.

A welcome change of pace was provided by her next role, Margaret, the irrepressible older sister in *Penrod*, a com-

HELEN HAYES

edy drawn from Booth Tarkington's stories about the escapades of an unruly young boy. The New York run of *Penrod* was cut short by a polio epidemic in the fall of 1918, which caused the closing of plays catering primarily to child audiences.

Before the year was out Miss Hayes was cast as another Margaret, in James M. Barrie's *Dear Brutus*, a charming fantasy about a group of people who are given a brief opportunity to live life as it might have been. Miss Hayes' only scene came at the end of the second act when she appeared as the dream daughter an artist might have had. Although the director constantly criticized her at rehearsals, the star of *Dear Brutus*, William Gillette, who played the artist, believed in her talent. For many evenings he had Mrs. Brown bring Helen to secret rehearsals in which he and Helen practiced their one scene together.

His faith was rewarded. On the opening night, December 23, 1918, Helen Hayes made a notable impression on the critics. The comment that appeared in the *New York Tribune* review the following morning was typical: "Miss Hayes is as eager as Christmas morning and as dazzling as Christmas night. It may be that nobody will ever call her the great Miss Hayes, but if not she will have to grow out of an amazing equipment of natural charm and technical skill."

With many regrets, she left *Dear Brutus* in May, 1919, to fulfill a previous commitment to another producer for a summer repertory season in Washington. Her regrets were increased when the new venture collapsed at the end of the second week. However, by July she was in the midst of rehearsals for Booth Tarkington's *Clarence*, which became one of the biggest hits of the season when it opened in New York in September.

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While *Clarence* still was running, Miss Hayes left the cast to play the title role in *Bab*, a new comedy based on Mary Roberts Rinehart's stories about a sub-deb. Before coming in to New York, *Bab* toured throughout New England in the spring of 1920 to highly enthusiastic audiences. For the brown-eyed, brown-haired, petite Helen Hayes, the reception was as cordial off-stage as on, especially while *Bab* was playing in Boston, within commuting distance for the Harvard undergraduates. It was during this tour that the name of Helen Hayes first was given featured billing on a theatre marquee.

When *Bab* closed temporarily for the summer, Mrs. Brown took Helen to an exclusive vacation resort where she might have an opportunity to study sub-debs at first hand. Unfortunately, when *Bab* opened in New York in October, Miss Hayes' performance seemed to have suffered from the realistic touches she added; the critical notices were not very favorable. After a brief New York engagement, *Bab* went on tour.

The fall of 1921 brought two quick failures in a row, *The Wren* (in which one critic remarked that she "suffered from fallen archness") and *Golden Days*; but in 1922 she had considerable success with a comedy called *To the Ladies*, both in New York and on tour. *To the Ladies* had been written by George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly; Marc Connelly was to be responsible for one of the most important events in Helen Hayes' life: her first meeting with the man who was to become her husband.

One November day in the fall of 1923, while walking down Fifth Avenue after rehearsals for her new play, *We Moderns*, Miss Hayes was hailed by Mr. Connelly, who persuaded her to accompany him to a party in the studio of a popular woman artist. Helen went reluctantly; she was shy

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and timid and never could think of anything to say when confronted with brilliant, witty people. A story is told that, at one party, summoning all her courage, she loudly and somewhat desperately announced, "Anyone who wants my piano is willing to it." In the midst of the silence that greeted this rather incomprehensible remark, George S. Kaufman turned to her and said, "Well, that's very seldom of you, Helen."

Once at the studio party with Marc Connelly, Helen found herself off in a corner, increasingly ill-at-ease, until a good-looking young man with tousled hair came toward her holding forth some peanuts. "I wish they were emeralds," he said. The young man, she discovered, was the successful young playwright, Charles MacArthur. Five years later, on August 17, 1928, they were married.

After the eventful meeting with Charles MacArthur, Miss Hayes appeared in several productions which lasted only briefly, including a presentation of Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, in which she played the kittenish Egyptian queen. By the spring of 1926, both Helen and Mrs. Brown were somewhat discouraged. Most of Helen's performances had been popular with both the critics and the public, even when the plays themselves were failures; however, with the exception of *Caesar and Cleopatra*, she had had little opportunity to display her ability in anything but ingenue roles.

Then, just as they were making plans to sail for Europe aboard a tramp steamer, they received a call from producer William A. Brady. His lease on a New York theatre had only two months to run, and, rather than leave the theatre vacant, he planned to revive James M. Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows* for a limited engagement. His wife, actress Grace George, had insisted that Helen Hayes would be ideal as Maggie Wylie, the spirited heroine who hides her great charm be-

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hind a plain manner.

Remembering her success in Barrie's *Dear Brutus*, Helen Hayes accepted Mr. Brady's offer. It was the turning point in her career. *What Every Woman Knows* opened in New York on April 13, 1926; instead of a limited engagement of a few weeks, it ran for more than a year in New York and on tour. With the splendid blend of pathos and comedy in her characterization of Maggie Wylie, Helen Hayes at twenty-six had emerged as one of the most promising actresses on the American stage.

In the fall of 1927 her performance as a Southern belle who commits suicide to conceal her pregnancy turned a very poor play, *Coquette*, into an outstanding popular success. In 1931 she went to Hollywood to spend the first of several summers making motion pictures. *The Sin of Madelon Claudet*, for which Charles MacArthur wrote the script, won her an Academy Award. Films of Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* also were successful, but she was unhappy with her other motion pictures and obtained a release from her contract as soon as possible.

In the meantime, she had achieved another dramatic triumph on the New York stage in Maxwell Anderson's *Mary of Scotland* late in 1933. Critics were astounded by the fact that the diminutive Miss Hayes, by the very force of her characterization of the six-foot queen of the Scots, gave the illusion of towering over the other actors on the stage.

Mary of Scotland was followed by one of Miss Hayes' greatest successes, *Victoria Regina*, which opened in New York the day after Christmas, 1935; with a few brief vacations, she played it until January, 1939. To prepare for the role, Miss Hayes made a special trip to England to do research on Queen Victoria, whom she was to portray from girlhood to

HELEN HAYES

old age. Her remarkable performance was so authentic it amazed even one of Victoria's granddaughters who saw the play in New York. Miss Hayes was now established as one of the most expert actresses in the theatre.

October, 1939, brought *Ladies and Gentlemen*, written by her husband and Ben Hecht; 1940, the role of Viola in *Twelfth Night*; 1941, Maxwell Anderson's *Candle in the Wind*; 1943, *Harriet*, in which she portrayed the crusading authoress of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

On October 31, 1946, *Happy Birthday* had its New York premiere. The critics scorned the play; but Miss Hayes' performance as a librarian who pursues the man she loves into the Jersey Mecca Cocktail Bar and becomes delightfully tipsy in the process attracted capacity audiences for 564 performances.

After a London appearance in 1948 as the mother in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, Miss Hayes returned to America and began touring the summer theatres in 1949 in a pre-Broadway tryout of a new comedy, *Good Housekeeping*. In the cast was her nineteen-year-old daughter, Mary MacArthur. Toward the end of the summer Mary complained of a cold; Miss Hayes sent her to their home in Nyack, New York, to recuperate. A few days later Mary was in the hospital; she had been fatally stricken with polio. Less than seven years later Miss Hayes suffered another tragic loss when her husband died. Before this, however, Miss Hayes and her husband had watched, with increasing pride, the blossoming career of a promising young actor, their adopted son, James MacArthur.

Since 1950 Helen Hayes has achieved a number of notable successes: the charming, gracious, ineffectual mother in *The Wisteria Trees*, Joshua Logan's adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*; the giddy Mrs. Howard V. Larue II in *Mary*

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Chase's comic fantasy, *Mrs. McThing*; Mrs. Antrobus in a revival of Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*, who endures war, flood, famine and an errant husband to hold her family together. In 1957 she played an eccentric French countess in an adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *Time Remembered*; in 1958 she played the wife of a New England tavern keeper in Eugene O'Neill's *A Touch of the Poet*. In the last decade she also has made two motion pictures, *My Son John* in 1951, and *Anastasia* in 1956. In 1960 she was busy with plans to head a repertory company on a thirty-week tour of Europe and Latin America, starting in Madrid in March, 1961.

The "amazing equipment of natural charm and technical skill" which the *New York Tribune* critic praised back in 1918 has increased, rather than diminished, with the years. The sincerity and authority of her performances have turned mediocre plays into popular successes; her skill in comedy has made many merely silly lines seem uproariously funny. Quiet, generous, unassuming and courageous, she has moved steadily forward into the very front rank of the contemporary theatre.

-

Julie Harris

1925 -

-



Julie Harris as Joan of Arc in *The Lark*

Julie Harris

1925 -

IN 1950, while appearing in *The Member of the Wedding*, Julie Harris received from Helen Hayes a handkerchief that had been given to Miss Hayes by Julia Marlowe, the famous Shakespearean actress, and to Miss Marlowe by the great Sarah Bernhardt. The gift indicated Miss Hayes' belief that a promising future in the theatre awaited the young actress. In the years since then, Julie Harris has amply fulfilled that promise.

The daughter of William Pickett Harris, a prosperous Detroit stockbroker and associate curator of mammals at the University of Michigan's Museum of Zoology, Julie Ann Harris was born in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, on December 2, 1925. Her mother, Elise Smith Harris, had been a trained nurse before her marriage. The Harris home, on the shore of Lake St. Clair, Michigan, was so huge that in childhood Julie had a difficult time remembering exactly how many rooms it had.

From an early age she was determined to be an actress. Her first real challenge came when she was a fourteen-year-old student at the Grosse Pointe Country Day School. Cast in the title role in *The Juggler of Notre Dame*, Julie was momentarily stymied by the scene in which the juggler performs before the church altar as a sign of his devotion. Although she was a skilled fencer and hockey player, she had never learned

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to juggle. At the performance she solved the problem brilliantly by doing the scene in pantomime.

At fifteen she spent the first of three summers studying acting and dancing at the Perry-Mansfield Workshop in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. In 1944, after a year at a fashionable girls' school in Providence, Rhode Island, and another year at Miss Hewitt's school in New York City, she enrolled at the Yale School of Drama.

A part in a Manhattan-bound comedy, *It's a Gift*, lured her away from Yale in the spring of 1945. Although the director fired her at the end of five days of rehearsal, she was later re-hired at the author's insistence. Even so, she soon was out of work; *It's a Gift* lasted only forty-seven performances in New York. Julie returned to her classes at Yale.

While working at a summer theatre in Bridgeton, Maine, in 1946, she met and married a young lawyer named Jay Julien; they were divorced eight years later.

From 1946 through 1949 Julie Harris had small roles in ten productions, none of which lasted more than ten weeks in New York. They did challenge her versatility: she played an Irish peasant in *The Playboy of the Western World*, the White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*, a witch in *Macbeth*, a South American hostage in *Montserrat*. Brief as her appearances were, they brought her an increasing reputation. *Sundown Beach* lasted only seven performances in September, 1948, but it won her a *Theatre World* award as a "Promising Personality." In November, 1948, her portrayal of a kleptomaniac in *The Young and Fair* gained her the New York Drama Critics' Circle award as the "Most Promising Actress." During these years she also worked and studied with the Actors' Studio, the famous group that stresses the "Method" originated by the Russian actor Stanislavski, by which an actor

JULIE HARRIS

totally identifies himself with the character he is portraying.

Late in 1949, Julie Harris began rehearsals for Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*. Mrs. McCullers' first play, it was loose and rambling in structure, but had many beautifully written scenes. It was not a success in its tryout engagements before coming in to New York and, despite considerable re-writing, seemed to have only a slight chance of success when it opened in Manhattan on January 5, 1950.

Twenty-four-year-old Julie Harris was cast as a twelve-year-old tomboy, Frankie Addams. Suffering the bittersweet agony of growing up, Frankie, in a desperate attempt at sophistication, decides to call herself "F. Jasmine Addams." For her brother's wedding, of which she is to be a member, she buys a scarlet evening dress, realizing too late that it is in hideously bad taste. A slim girl, five-feet-four-inches tall, with her reddish gold hair cut short, the blue-eyed Miss Harris was physically credible in the role; but it was her brilliant blend of pathos and comedy that made her characterization so memorable. *The Member of the Wedding* was an overwhelming success at its New York premiere; it ran until March, 1951. Miss Harris received both a Donaldson Award and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award as the best supporting actress of the season.

After spending the summer of 1951 in Europe, Julie Harris undertook a role distinctly different from that of Frankie Addams: Sally Bowles in *I Am a Camera*, a play by John van Druten based on Christopher Isherwood's stories about life in pre-Hitler Berlin. Sally Bowles is a flamboyant, amoral English girl who has fled from her middle-class family to lead a Bohemian existence in Germany. At the New York opening of *I Am a Camera* at the Empire Theatre on November 28, 1951, Miss Harris's bravura performance was hailed

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by the critics. John Mason Brown called her "A young actress blessed with unmistakable genius." Brooks Atkinson commented: "She plays with a virtuosity and an honesty that are altogether stunning . . . Miss Harris has the quicksilver and the genius we all long to discover on the stage." On January 10, 1952, at a party after the performance, Julie Harris was elevated to stardom.

After the New York run of *I Am a Camera*, she made her first trip to Hollywood, where she re-created the role of Frankie Addams in the screen version of *The Member of the Wedding*. She then embarked on a coast-to-coast tour of *I Am a Camera*, which lasted well into 1953. In the fall she began rehearsals for Louis Kronenberger's adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *Mademoiselle Colombe*, the story of a young French wife who goes on the stage and is led astray by the immoral life of the theatre. *Mademoiselle Colombe* opened in New York early in January, 1954; it closed at the end of February.

Two motion pictures followed: John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* in Hollywood and the film version of *I Am a Camera* in England. Her next stage venture was Lillian Hellman's adaptation of *The Lark*, Jean Anouilh's version of the story of Joan of Arc. Before *The Lark* opened there was considerable speculation as to whether the Hellman-Anouilh portrait of Joan could withstand comparison with Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* and whether Miss Harris's characterization would measure up to the Joans of Katharine Cornell and Uta Hagan. All doubts disappeared after the New York premiere on November 17, 1955. The cast received eight curtain calls; Julie Harris was given a standing ovation. Brooks Atkinson called her performance "Triumphant"; Walter Kerr called it "Fiercely, wonderfully believable." She received five different awards as the best actress of the season. After the New York run, *The Lark*

JULIE HARRIS

toured the country for twenty-one weeks, starting at the Central City, Colorado, Drama Festival in August, 1956.

For the next few years Julie Harris was an energetic traveler, accompanied by her present husband, theatrical producer Manning Gurian, and their son Peter, born on July 19, 1955. In April, 1957, she filmed *The Truth About Women* in England; in the fall she appeared in New York in the Restoration comedy, *The Country Wife*; in May and June, 1958, she filmed *The New Gossoon* in Ireland with the famous Abbey Players. From October, 1958, until May, 1959, she toured the United States in *The Warm Peninsula*, a comedy about a Milwaukee girl who seeks happiness in Miami; it had a brief New York run in the fall.

Equally adept on television, Miss Harris has made six notable appearances: *The Good Fairy*, *The Lark*, *Johnny Belinda*, *A Doll's House*, *Ethan Frome* and *Little Moon of Alban*, the last of which, in an expanded form, served as her stage vehicle for the fall of 1960.

The only one of the younger actresses to follow the tradition of touring the country set by Katharine Cornell, Helen Hayes and the Lunts, Julie Harris set herself a new challenge in the summer of 1960: her first Shakespearean roles, Juliet and Blanche, in *Romeo and Juliet* and *King John* for the Shakespearean Festival Theatre of Canada. Her performances lived up to the tribute once paid her by the late Ethel Barrymore: "That girl can do anything!"

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Husband and wife in private life, Frederick Wagner and Barbara Brady first met at a summer theatre in Massachusetts where he was doing publicity and Miss Brady was appearing as Jo in *Little Women*.

Frederick Wagner describes himself as "stage-struck since the age of fourteen." Born in Philadelphia, where he saw his first professional theatrical performance, he was graduated *summa cum laude* from Duke University, receiving an M.A. degree for his thesis on *Henry James and the Theatre*. He then taught English at the University of Oklahoma and at Duke, and, after a stint in the army, came to New York City to study playwriting at the American Theatre Wing. For the past several years he has been handling sales promotion for a prominent New York publisher.

Barbara Brady comes from a family of distinguished actresses: her grandmother is Grace George; her mother is Katharine Alexander; and her aunt was the late Alice Brady. Both her grandfather and father, the late William A. Brady and William A. Brady, Jr., produced plays in which a number of the actors and actresses described in this book appeared. Born in New York City and educated at the Westlake School in Beverly Hills and at Finch College in New York, Miss Brady received a *Theatre World* Award as a "Promising Personality" for her Broadway debut in *The Velvet Glove*. Although she left the stage immediately after the play closed, her main enthusiasm still is the theatre.

The Wagners live in New York City, within walking distance of the Broadway theatres, the "most fascinating places in the world" to them.

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